# Bugles In The Night

Barry Benefield

BUGLES IN THE NIGHT

*By the same Author*

THE CHICKEN WAGON FAMILY

SHORT TURNS

# BUGLES IN THE NIGHT

BY

BARRY BENEFIELD

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*To*

MY FATHER

# CONTENTS


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| *I* | A Soldier of Time | 3 |
| *II* | The Bugle Calls Again | 13 |
| *III* | The Battle Has Begun | 25 |
| *IV* | Furious Affability Man | 36 |
| *V* | Alice Kibbe, Strategist | 46 |
| *VI* | The Landlord Attacks | 63 |
| *VII* | Wind of the Morning | 86 |
| *VIII* | Mother! O My Mother! | 106 |
| *IX* | "Old Lame Duck" Goes Slow | 147 |
| *X* | Gentleman of Temper | 159 |
| *XI* | And So He Fares Forth | 173 |
| *XII* | A Crafty Bullwinkle | 187 |
| *XIII* | Under a Little Moon | 209 |
| *XIV* | Lesson in Remembrance | 223 |
| *XV* | Cap, It's Come at Last | 234 |
| *XVI* | Then You'll Remember Me | 250 |
| *XVII* | Patrol on the Old Roads | 258 |
| *XVIII* | Clue for the Bullwinkle | 269 |
| *XIX* | Alice Mines a Memory | 285 |
| *XX* | "Old Lame Duck" Rampages | 290 |
| *XXI* | Retreat, in Good Order | 296 |

# BUGLES IN THE NIGHT

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*CHAPTER I*

*—A Soldier of Time*

EXCITEMENT now in the usually quiet little town. Fire-crackers that can't possibly await the night pop and fizz on the sidewalks, down the old-fashioned alleys, out in the sandy streets. Boys run shouting among the swaying crowds clotted in front of the stores, peddling from baskets dark-red apples, light-yellow Florida oranges, and small square packages of fire-crackers so appealing in their soft Oriental wrappers all scrawled across with strange characters in ink of glistening gold. Feet shuffle on gritty board and concrete; country mules impatient to start home heehaw mournfully with uplifted heads and teeth exposed in hideous grins. Wagon-loads of laughing people calling good-bys to lingering friends go dashing away in clouds of dust. Proud black possessors of brand-new banjos, fiddles, accordions, mouth-organs, and jews'-harps test them to the plaudits of extraordinarily generous audiences. Occasional snatches of gay alcoholic

song taking high notes recklessly rise shrilly above the general hum and buzz and clatter of trade and conversation. The sky is dim, the damp air rich with smells of burning powder, cottony new clothes, fresh fruit, and pungent liquors; and everywhere is the vast, immense, childlike joy of the negro, faintly sounding undertones of something very old and very sad. It is Christmas eve in Crebillon.

Here comes Easley Wheatley down the street, on his habitual noon trip to the post-office at the outer edge of the business section and then to midday dinner at the near-by Chartrain House, his round head bent to the left, limping slightly in his right leg, his right arm extended, and his thumb snapping against the second finger of his hand to keep time with his square-toed boots. Meeting a thickly massed crowd of negroes, he lays a small hand on a giant to the left and the other hand on an orator to the right.

"Gangway, you black scalawags!"

His voice is a caress, and his words are cheered with bursts of laughter and huge thumpings of great-muscled thighs.

"Lissen at *him*. Did you evah see his beat? Chrismus eve gif', Mr. Wheatley, Chrismus eve gif'. You ain't gwine to fergit Ole Rip, now, is you, Mr. Wheatley?"

The crowd opening to let him pass, he walks

through it as if it isn't there. Its appeals are merely by way of greeting. A thousand Louisiana negroes have already so greeted him since nine o'clock.

"Dar he go, de bes' cotton-buyer in Crebillon. Mos' of dese cotton-buyers cuts a bale all to pieces an' snatches a pound outen every hole dey cuts, an' den dey'll haggle around all mawnin' about de price. Not Mr. Wheatley, naw, *suh;* he make one little bittie cut on bof sides, take a handful outen dis side an' dat an' shake hit over de pa'm of his lef' hand, his haid cocked to one side lak it always is. Den he run a finger over dat pa'm to feel how much grit de cotton got. Den he shred out a little bittie piece of cotton wif his white fingers an' pull it to see de len'th an' stren'th of de staple. 'Jes' middlin', Rip,' he say softly, 'an' I'll gie you eight an' a bit—take it on to de warehouse.' Two minutes an' he's done hit all. Yassuh, an' you can try around town all day if you wants to, but you won't do no better'n Mr. Wheatley's price. He shore is *one* cotton-buyer."

Through the six or seven commercial streets of the widely extended little town Mr. Wheatley goes on slowly, choosing the longest route to the post-office. He feels all around him the throb of the festal spirit, but this year nothing in him throbs with it. Even in the war, now nearly forty years ago, even when the last hopes pinned on Lee were fading, Christmas could yet touch him. Those ten years aft-

erward, while he was a steamboat captain helping to make Crebillon a gay little North Louisiana replica of his beloved New Orleans, seeing his sister once a week on his up-trips, then of course he met every glad time eagerly; but even after the coming of the railroads robbed the steamboats of their traffic and Crebillon of its undisputed business headship in a small empire among the pines, and even after Jessie sickened and was buried up yonder on the hill all within a week, still he was within reach of the Western world's happiest day, though for months he thought nothing could ever again make him forget for a day the loss of his grave and gallant big sister.

*She* was a good sport, and she wore her clothes like a queen for all her two hundred pounds, and she was a perfect pal.

And all the long yellow years since then, years of lonesome living among his tables of cotton-samples on that vast third floor of the Blanchard Building down by the wharf, using the Chartrain House only for his meals after Jessie was gone, however flat and dreary the first eleven months of a year were, the beginning of the twelfth always found him keyed up in anticipation of the coming Day. But now! Christmas eve here? Yes, and already half gone!

"It passes me by—I'm old."

Mr. Wheatley lets his right hand drop to his side. After all it is a silly habit, snapping one's fingers that way, as if sounding castanets for a dance. Castanets for an old man? Silly indeed. But presently, such is habit, his hand is raised, and again he is snapping his fingers, though somehow much more gently now.

Christmas is already in the post-office. The floor is littered with wrappings of gifts that had to be seen at once. Lydia Pilduff, working joyfully as an extra holiday clerk here, is handing out packages through a window, her great moon-face beaming out at youth on tiptoes.

"Easley Wheatley? How *are* you anyhow?" She sends her voice booming over the waiting heads to him. "This is the window if you have notice of a package too large for your box; the next window if you're sendin' away a package. How *are* you, Easley? Why, goodness gracious, this is Christmas eve, Easley!"

"Yes, Miss Lyd, I know."

"Well, you don't look it, I must say."

In his box there is only a perfunctory Christmas card from his pompous bilious nephew in Mobile. Mr. Wheatley has already sent presents to the two pompous bilious children of his nephew.

Crebillon was built for thirty thousand people

and as a future metropolis, so that the three thousand left there fill it no more than a thin old man fills the suit that was made for him when he was in the plumpness of prosperous middle age. The tremendous dining-room of the Chartrain House echoes the footsteps of the two or three negro waiters going slowly to and from the kitchen far back to the rear of the long three-story brick building. Mr. Wheatley sits by a window at a table that has been his for more than thirty years, and is served as usual by Little Joker, there being in town another Joker called Big.

"Chrismus eve gif', Mr. Easley," he murmurs, rubbing the pale soft palms of his black-backed hands, purring like an ancient cat and whispering over and over as if to himself, "Yassuh, yassuh."

"Little Joker, how long have you been here?"

"Thirty yeah, or forty, I dunno, suh. Shucks, you ought to know, Mr. Easley; I come oveh from de Grigsby House de yeah you begin stoppin' heah once a week, but Miss Jessie she stay all de time."

"Is it Christmas eve to you, Little Joker, or is it just December twenty-fo'?"

"Suh? You say which is it?"

"Yes, Little Joker, how does it feel to you?"

"Mr. Easley, hit's December twenty-fo'. Naw, suh, naw, suh, don't let's git away from Chrismus

eve. I done axed you for a gif'. But, Lawd save us, I wisht Miss Jessie was down heah; *she* could spunk you up, Mr. Easley. Me, I ain't no good no mo' dataway."

"Never mind, Little Joker, you're all right; now go get my dinner, you know what I want."

He turns in his chair and watches the round-shouldered old waiter shuffling along the central aisle of the long dining-room, his white head bobbing every time he lays down one of his flat feet. What a black whirlwind of high spirits Little Joker used to be!

At six o'clock Mr. Wheatley eats again at Little Joker's table, and retires to the third floor of the Blanchard Building. In an office partitioned off from the rest of the great loft he has a high-legged desk, a bed, a box-stove with a pineapple design on its sides, two rocking-chairs with rawhide seats that once had red hair on them and are now worn smooth and shiny, and a tall stool for the desk. He puts down for his cat the package of food Little Joker has made up for him, and sits rocking near-by watching the old black aristocrat eat.

"Cæsar, that's Christmas fare you're gettin', an' this is Christmas eve, though little you care, hey, Cæsar? It is mistin' rain out there an' it's dusty on the bayou, but what do you care, Cæsar, or I, or those youngsters at their bonfires, or their fathers

who are buyin' things to play Santa Claus with? Only they feel that it is Christmas, an' we don't, Cæsar."

And yet he goes to a window and stands a long time wistfully looking out into the darkness. A dimmed musketry of small fire-crackers comes to him; a sky-rocket trailing a golden tail shoots into sight above the line of buildings opposite, curves downward, bursts into a shower of blue and green sparks, is gone. "An' that's the end of it, too, Cæsar. But nobody saw *it* fall."

He sits down again, and Cæsar, on the high stool washing his face, holds a left paw suspended halfway to his ear, gazing fixedly at his master with large-pupiled yellow eyes.

After a while, holding the coal-oil lamp in his hand, Mr. Wheatley opens his office door, escorts Cæsar to the stairway, and turns him out to his mysterious adventures in dark alleys.

"Go, black proconsul of the night. Cautious age nor anything else will ever dim your spirit. So long as you can totter I see you farin' forth to deeds of derring-do in those dear dark alleys of yours. You'll fling into every fight, an' when your claws grow dull you'll howl all the more horribly to make up for it. Go on, Cæsar, go on: you have crossed the Rubicon again."

Walking back toward the office, Mr. Wheatley raises the lamp and looks about the cavernous loft floor. Rows and rows of tables, only a few of them clear of cotton-samples and blurring with dust; odor of old brick, old mortar, old boards; distant grotesque shadows that mimic him; a stillness that somehow pierces him, to-night.

Sighing, he goes again into the box-office. Turning low the wick of the lamp, he sits by the stove, unpolished and gray, his legs crossed, his hands behind his closely cropped white head, his sea-blue eyes upon a packing-house lithograph of a herd of fat tame sheep, presumably doomed. It is getting late, and away off somewhere crowds of boys, all natural dramatists of life, are now exploding their largest fire-crackers in quick succession. This is their climax. To the old soldier they are cannon booming. The sky outside his window faintly flickers with reflections from distant swarming rockets and blazing balls from Roman candles. Now the stocks of fireworks are running low, the clans are deserting their individual bonfires for a massed procession, tin trumpets call to blood-brothers across the vacant lots. The night is full of bugles.

And early in the year following, having found a home in a friendly meat market for Cæsar, Easley Wheatley enters the privately endowed Choiseul

Confederate Home, out from town three miles, in a sleepy grove of whispering pines, paying in for promised refuge for the rest of his life nearly all the money he has; and enters looking back.

## *CHAPTER II*

## *—The Bugle Calls Again*

WHEREVER there is a large resident group of men, even of old men, there is likely to be not far away some such place as Ella Whipple's. Her one-storied frame house sat alone on the side of a little-used country road half a mile away from the Choiseul Confederate Home—less than that by the path running through the woods between them. There all the old soldiers who would could find drinks, music, and female companionship of a sort, and Ella's house lay on the road to Crebillon.

One May night following his retirement Mr. Wheatley was a member of the group of six who were that day entitled to passes and special privileges. Lucky windfalls had come to two of them from momentarily expansive relatives, and all of them expected to spend cautious small amounts from their tobacco funds. Mr. Wheatley had saved out five hundred dollars for that broad fund, and having closed his bank-account and being sensitive about the size of his tobacco fund he carried it in his wallet by day and slept on it by night. He felt it

as something strangely precious, a secret key that could unlock a door that might become terrible, a link with a younger world, sudden power for one who might be thought powerless. Their tobacco funds were buried treasure to the old soldiers.

The six left the Home at nine in the morning, had midday dinner at the Chartrain House, sat a while in the parish court-house listening to a dull case and sharply criticizing the lawyers, played some pool and billiards, had a drink or so apiece, recklessly ate huge suppers of fried catfish in a disreputable back-street restaurant, and on the way home early that night dropped in at Ella's place.

She met them in the hall, a tiny wrinkled thing who gobbled rather than talked because her palate was gone. "Somethin' brand-new, boys," she whispered. "Just come in to-day. You'll have to shake dice, I expect, to see who is the lucky one."

They swaggered on into the yellow-plush parlor, paying little attention to her, only Mr. Wheatley having understood what she had said. To counteract the thick odor of talcum-powder and patchouli he raised the windows but left the blinds closed. Presently all the callers were gallantly word-sparring with Ella's somewhat aged veterans. She stood waiting at the door leading into the hall, and after a while she commanded in a contemptuous whisper, "Come on in, you." She winked at Mr.

Wheatley sitting alone on the yellow-plush sofa. A tall, wide-shouldered, very white girl, her head down, came in slowly, looked around from under her lowered lashes, glanced inquiringly at Ella, and went to the yellow sofa.

She wore a long white dress with many tucks in it that fell below her black shoe-tops and was held high up around her throat with bits of whalebones, and there was a large old-fashioned breastpin made of woven gold wire fastened at her collar. She pushed her feet as far back under the sofa as she could and sat up straight, gazing steadily at her hands twisting in her lap.

The other old soldiers and their partners were now in loud conversation, Ella had slipped out "to dig up the drinks," and the big girl in white began edging away from Mr. Wheatley. Every now and then she felt at the breastpin with trembling fingers, ran her left hand back over her mouse-colored hair that was parted in the middle and combed smoothly over her ears, and then locking it again with her right hand, tried to bury them both in her lap. But Mr. Wheatley saw that even so they were shaking.

"You are left-handed, I see," he said, smiling; and then very softly, "What is your name, *child?*"

Her face had been white, but at the question a flood of pink came sweeping up from her heart, dyeing her throat and face and even her half-

hidden hands. "Alice Kibbe," she whispered as if she were choking.

"But if you had belonged in this place, child, you'd have said merely 'Alice'; you wouldn't have given a family name. An' you wouldn't have said 'sir' to me. How old are you, Alice Kibbe?"

"Seventeen—no, no, twenty, I mean." She looked fearfully toward the hall door from beneath her lowered lashes. "My mother taught me to say 'sir' an' 'ma'am' to everybody much older than I, especially if we respected them."

Some inner compulsion made it necessary for Mr. Wheatley to say to himself that he was sixty-one and all his companions more than that, and most of the inmates of the Home more than that. From time to time Alice glanced at him out of the corners of her great gray eyes. Outside a wandering spring wind stirred the trees, and through the slats of the blinds floated something of the May night. Coming with it from the rare magnolia bushes, set all about in the yard near the back porch, was the perfume, stabbingly sweet, of magical little magnolia buds no bigger than baby roses.

As Ella Whipple rushed swishingly up the hall with her tray, Mr. Wheatley halted her, whispered something, and went on. Leaving the main hall and going down a narrow passage running to the back of the house, he came to a small room next to the

kitchen. The lamp on the table was burning low; he turned up the wick until the room was flooded with yellow light. Keeping on his gray felt hat, he sat down in a rocking-chair, his back to the open door, his clean-shaved, pain-sweetened face now as hard as stone. Presently he knew she was in the room, standing somewhere behind him, though she had come in so slowly and so softly that she had made no noise.

"Close the door," he said sharply.

He heard it shut to.

"Lock it."

The key grated in the lock. He sat slowly rocking back and forth, his hands gripping the sides of the chair.

He could not see her standing with her back to the wall, her left hand fumbling at her throat. Twice she took three steps toward him, her left hand across her eyes as if to shield them from something frightful and her right held out as if in appeal; and then she retreated as far as she could go.

"Alice Kibbe!" he called gently.

"Yes, sir?"

"Don't be afraid."

"No, sir."

"Bring up a chair an' sit over on the other side of the table if you wish. Then blow out the lamp: the blinds are open; there is light enough."

Only the moon shone in the room now, streaming over the little man in gray and the big girl in white. They sat there for a long while, he leaning forward with his chin in his hand, she stiff and straight in her chair.

"I'll have to be gettin' back in yonder, sir, I reckon, or she'll be after me."

"Old Ella? I've settled all that. You may keep the door locked all night. She won't bother you. When I go I'll slip out of this window. Why are you in this house, Alice Kibbe?" His voice was suddenly a sword, and he stood before her.

"I can't tell you, sir."

"You know—"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you *want* to be here, then?"

He heard no answer, and she did not raise her bent head. Walking to the window, he stared out across the back yard. It was nine o'clock; there came drifting through the woods the bedtime bugle-call from the Confederate Home, sounding so gentle coming so far; and there drifted across his memory the figures of Lee and Jackson and Davis, and somehow a great gray army on the march, and the face of his sister Jessie.

The old cavalryman straightened up, clicked his heels together, and saluted as if in acknowledgment

of an order from a superior officer. He turned to look again at Alice Kibbe. She had twisted about in her chair, and was leaning her forehead against the back of it, and he saw the cloth of her dress alternately tighten across her shoulders and loosen into deep wrinkles. The bugle was on its last note now, the scent of the magolias throbbed in the air, and the sturdy little man in gray stood by her chair.

"Does your mother know, Alice Kibbe?" His voice was infinitely tender.

"Oh, don't, sir; please, please."

"I want you to pay close attention to what I say, child. I'll kneel here by your chair an' whisper so no one else can possibly hear even if they were listenin'. I'm an old man, Alice Kibbe, an' maybe in my second childhood, an' silly; but I know you don't belong here, an' that you wouldn't be here if you warn't forced in some way, an' that you'd run away if you warn't afraid to; so I'm goin' to take you out, Alice Kibbe, take you out this night. An' it will be done quietly; you'll have no questions to answer from anybody. I don't know what's ahead, nor what I've got to fight, nor what the end's goin' to be, but, child, I've gone into many a battle knowin' no more than I do now. I'm ready for one more battle before the last bugle comes. Where are your people, Alice Kibbe?"

"There are none."

"That makes no difference; out you come tonight."

"No, you can't do anything, sir. Nobody could. It's all over with me."

"It's just begun, Alice Kibbe."

"You'd better not try to do anything, sir. You'll only get into trouble. If you get mixed up with me, they'll put you out of the Home. Nothin' could help me except to go far away, very far away, an' I can't do that."

"Alice, I'm droppin' out of that window now. I can step out of it almost. Between ten and eleven I'll be back. You get together a few things, not many, in your valise over there, an' be ready when I come again."

"Where to, sir? She can put me in jail if she wants to, she says. Leave me alone. You'd just get yourself into trouble an' me into more. Besides, sir, I don't know you, except a little by hearsay. Everybody I've trusted in the last two or three years has hurt me. I'm afraid now, afraid to trust anybody."

"Could *anything* be worse than this, Alice Kibbe?"

"No, sir, it couldn't, an' that's a fact. I'd forgotten that. I'm so worried; I've been worried so long I've got no sense, I reckon. My head's numb, like it had been beaten, somehow. It seems like I'm

kind of dead, already. Are we goin' far, very far away, sir?"

"Yes, Alice Kibbe, very far away."

"Well, I'll trust everything to you, sir. There's nothin' else to do. Anyway, nothin' matters now, I reckon."

As the old soldier cut through the woods toward the Home, walking as fast as his limping leg would let him, a rheumatic twinge shot through his wounded thigh and he slackened his gait. The damp chill of approaching midnight had got into his bones. It crossed his mind that he was a meddling old fool—so he phrased it to himself. He visualized an article in next week's paper saying that Private Easley Wheatley, of the Choiseul Confederate Home, to which he had only recently retired to be with his old comrades, had nevertheless left it hurriedly last Tuesday night; he made no explanations and told no one farewell. At the same time a "young lady"—the paper would smartly use quotation-marks—named Alice Kibbe disappeared from the establishment of Ella Whipple on the Little Piney Road.

Mr. Wheatley could imagine the wild fury of his bilious nephew in Mobile, his only adult living relative, when the news reached him. The old soldier knew that for a while at the Home they would call his name with the others each day, and he seemed

to see the villainous winks and smiles all too wise of his ancient comrades when to the name of Private Easley Wheatley no one answered "present." And he could never go back, for he would have brought unpleasant publicity upon the institution. "Damned old fool!" he said to himself. "She's lost already. You can't do anything. Let her alone."

Now he came to a little circular clearing in the woods, all flooded with moonlight that was white like that gray-eyed helpless girl back there—a captive child for old men, a prisoner too dazed and too broken-spirited to attempt escape herself. The grass leaned under a heavy burden of dew glistening in the soft light. The wind waved slowly the great purple-black plumes of the pine-trees all about him, and he remembered, for the first time in fifty years, just the very tones of his mother singing by the cradle of a baby sister who also had missed her chance at happiness here below the stars. The air was clean and sweet in his nostrils. Out somewhere in the woods a bird sang and then stopped, and sang again as if it were making the most desperate attempt not to slip away to sleep with a song unsung in its heart.

The old soldier, fitting so perfectly into the white night, halted, looked up at the sky, straightened his shoulders, brushed the sticky webs of wood-spiders out of his eyes. As if answering some cautious counselor that spoke inside of him, he told himself that

the half-dozen moments in his memory that he liked oftenest to go back to and stay with longest were splendid incautious moments that somehow had the feel of this one.

And now he marched on through the woods, his head high and no misgivings troubling him. When the west-bound 11:45 train came groaning into the Crebillon station at 1:37 a small man in black and a tall girl in a long fuzzy brown cloak dashed out from behind an oil-tank and boarded it just as it got under way. There was nobody present to tell Alice Kibbe and Easley Wheatley good-by, or to note that they had started on a journey.

At Shreveport, between three and four in the morning, they changed to a north-bound through train, but again went to a coach. All the rest of the night and all next day Alice sat by the window looking out at the sliding scene, pulling down the curtain only at the stations. Mr. Wheatley brought her water and hurried out to depot restaurants to bring sandwiches and fruit for her and himself. She did not dare go walking through the train to the dining-car.

From time to time she asked him, "How far away are we now, sir?" And when at last he said, "More than five hundred miles, Alice Kibbe," she relaxed as if that were some safe goal she had set for herself, and fear went out of her eyes, and she drew a deep

sigh; and now that night had come again she leaned back in the corner of her seat and was sleeping like the child that she was. Every now and then she held her breath while she reached out her hand to touch his arm, and then, reassured, her bosom rose and fell regularly once more and the ghost of a pleased little smile played about the corners of her lips.

And Mr. Wheatley, his buried treasure reduced to little more than three hundred dollars, and scenting the battle of life that was coming, thrilled again as forty years before, and strained forward to meet it.

The next day they reached New York.

## *CHAPTER III*

## *—The Battle Has Begun*

ANY railroad station is a gateway of hopes and fears, and through that vast Grand Central Station, still centering upon the site of its two predecessors, in New York's East Forty-second Street, there passes daily a flood of them. Stand still and you can hear them—whispers multiplied to a low roar, the shuffling feet of prisoners of hope. Every few minutes a great gate opens and hundreds hurry down to a train that will take them away from New York, and as they go other great gates open and still more hundreds rush up the runways to meet the city—and some, terror freezing the very marrow in their bones, to meet it for the first time.

When one May day a long St. Louis train from the South and West eases cautiously to a halt there, like a steamer feeling its way into port, and opens its sides to let out its human load on the dark damp platform, where sophisticated pigeons flutter fearlessly about looking for space to forage for life, among the first to start up the runway is a small, old, broad-shouldered man with a pale pain-

sweetened face and an air of exaltation. His closely cut hair is white, his lean clean-shaved face is engraved with tiny wrinkles, he limps a little with his right leg, but he walks as a strong man walks. A certain stiffness in his trousers below the knees indicates boot-tops hidden underneath, and the heels are high and the toes are square. You feel that spurs should be tinkling behind his heels, and though he wears a suit and overcoat of black you know that his broad shoulders should be carrying a uniform.

Eagerly he comes up the runway, an invisible saber at his side, and eagerly too comes the big white girl, half a head taller than he, who clings to his left arm. Her white dress showing through the fuzzy brown coat looks strange and untimely in New York's cool May, and watching narrowly the clothing of other women she sees how odd and shabby all her own is. Perhaps that is why a tiny vertical wrinkle has caught and is holding the skin between her great, wide-set gray eyes.

"Yes, I know, child; we'll have to get us an outfit of clothin' pretty soon, won't we?" He smiles gaily at her.

"Yes, sir; sometime." And she smiles back, and the wrinkle is gone.

When Mr. Wheatley gets out into the main waiting-room he says: "An' now for a hotel an' some

rest before the battle begins. Are you afraid, Alice Kibbe?'

"Yes, sir, I reckon I am, a little." She squeezes his arm, and he sets down the two valises and reaches across his breast and pats her hand. "So am I, child, an' have been many a time before; but we're not goin' to run, are we?"

A strange old man in New York, without references, with little money, with only the business experience of a small-town cotton-buyer, looking for work! But New York welcomes as recruits for its manifold army only youth.

The first night they spend in two rooms of a near-by hotel at five dollars a room, and have dinner and breakfast sent up to them, because he somehow knows, though Alice Kibbe does not say so, that she would be ashamed to go into the dining-room with the clothes she has worn on her flight. The next day they are in two rooms of a cheaper hotel, and he brings in paper bags from Third Avenue the food they eat. And then they go to a very cheap boarding-house on Lexington Avenue. "We'll dig in here, child, for a while. I seem to hear the cannon growlin', the battle has begun."

Every morning now he spends dashing about to answer advertisements in person. Often he needs an entire morning to answer just one. Every afternoon

he writes ten or fifteen letters answering still others. Along about four o'clock he says: "Well, child, let's take a walk an' mail these as we go along. You haven't been out of the house to-day, have you? Surely somebody will yield to all this eloquence I have written here."

And though the city has not offered to buy the services of Mr. Easley Wheatley, soldier, steamboat captain, cotton-buyer, he and Alice Kibbe are falling in love with it. For her it is far removed from something and somebody very terrible, and there are so many people all about that she forgets to be afraid even of men, for she sees them only in crowds; and New York is big and strangely beautiful and subtly intoxicating. For him it is to be, he feels, the scene of the hardest battle he has ever fought and the battle he will most enjoy fighting. Alice Kibbe does not know how dangerously little money he has left, does not understand fully her position, and does not question it, such is her desperately necessary faith in the broad-shouldered little cavalryman who has picked her up and rushed her away to what she trusts is safety. The musty boarding-house is for her a place of blessed relief and rest, and the suit and coat and hat he has directed her to buy she accepts as simply as if his statement to strangers that she is his daughter is true and has always been true. And no father was ever

prouder of the trust of a daughter than Mr. Wheatley is of hers.

Thus now as they walk the streets of New York they see it only with the eyes of hope and love. Already are they New Yorkers in their hearts. To such eyes as theirs the city offers the unpriced gifts of kings. Every strange corner has beyond it fresh wonders to surprise them, and how many and many strange corners there are in New York to visitors newly come within its gates! The swift and glittering stream of life along Fifth Avenue changes its colors as they look; and tremendous buildings, seeming so slim they are so tall, carry their eyes up to the blue and white of the bending sky. Coveting nothing, they possess everything they see and like. A single pair of gleaming slippers occupying an entire show-window, treading regally upon a great field of purple velvet—these Alice Kibbe will look at with shining eyes, her left hand at her white throat, but they do no harm to her.

And in the midst of all the piled-up treasures of millions of men nothing is more appealing to the tall white girl with the round gray eyes than a dozen or so nervous brown sparrows dodging about among a gathering of tramp pigeons eating the oats prodigally spilled on the pavement by huge hairy-legged truck-horses at their midday meal. The infinitely daring sparrows, the pigeons with bits of rainbow

on their wings, a sleeping cat and her kittens in a butcher-shop door, a litter of woolly brown puppies in an animal store, the magical windows of flower shops that flame and sing with color, and sudden gifts of music, and children running and laughing in the back streets—sometimes Alice Kibbe squeezes Mr. Wheatley's arm and whispers, "Don't let's say a word, sir; it's a fairy-tale an' a dream."

A little old man in green-black clothes and a big white girl with turned-over shoes walking the streets of New York.

After a while they discover Central Park, and it is a discovery that takes their breath away; and there late one June night, on a bench on the high-set walk running around the reservoir and looking out over the dimpling field of gray water, shot with yellow light, Alice Kibbe begins speaking as if she were continuing something already begun, as indeed she has begun the story many a time before in her mind.

"An' so when my mother—she was a large woman with the sweetest face—died, my father sent me to live with an aunt of his. That was not so very far away from your Confederate Home, sir, but it was in another town. My father was a drummer, you see, an' away from home most of the time; an' he drank too much, an' after a while he died too. He was the *jolliest* man, an' he always walked as if he were

hurryin' to catch a train. My aunt sent me to school. At first she liked me, but not very long. After a while she began sayin' her husband was losin' his head about me, an' she would laugh, then she'd cry. 'Just an overgrown silly girl; not a woman at all.' That's what she'd say *at* me when her husband wasn't there. She was terribly afraid of him, though he seemed to be good to her. He was manager of a cotton-seed mill on the edge of town—a heavy, quiet, rosy-faced man with a bald head and a thick neck.

"Once when she was away from home a week, with a cousin in Shreveport who was about to die, an' I was in charge of the house, it happened, suddenly, all in a second.

"Somehow my aunt knew when she came back. She watched me, an' after six weeks whenever I had a sick stomach an' we were alone she would fall in a chair an' laugh hysterically, just pointin' her finger at me an' sayin' nothin' at all.

"Then Uncle Ed—but he wasn't my uncle, I just called him that because his wife was my aunt, you know—took me one Sunday in a buggy across the country to Crebillon, to a house out from town about two miles. He brought Mrs. Whipple to see me that afternoon, sayin' she was a fine doctor for women an' that I must let her do what she wanted to for me.

"I stayed there several months. It seemed like a

good many years. At that time Mrs. Whipple was very gentle with me. I did let her do what she wanted to with me, as Uncle Ed had told me to; I didn't understand all she said, she talks so funny, or all she did. But I thought I'd die once after a visit she made. But pretty soon I was feelin' better, only I was very weak, an' somehow I didn't care what happened to me. I wrote to my uncle an' aunt, but they didn't answer. Then Mrs. Whipple said the officers of the town where Uncle Ed lives were after me. If I came to her house, she said, an' did what she told me to, she would protect me an' never tell anybody anything. If I didn't something terrible would happen to me. The board money Uncle Ed had left was all used up. The landlady said, 'Go on to Ella's an' don't be a fool.' I had been closed up in shaded rooms so long I felt timid about tryin' to go out among strangers. An' I was weak an' trembly when I stood up. I had no money, or friends, or strength, or hope; and after two months more Mrs. Whipple took me. So that is how it was, sir."

The old soldier sits still, his arms crossed, his head bent forward on his chest. Alice Kibbe moves away from him. Maybe he does not want her so close to him now. The toy gray waves, almost at their feet, run up and tap the ancient stone wall and run away again, like jolly little children at play. Along the graveled walk a pair of lovers come slowly

marching, their feet in step, their bodies moving as one. They pass.

"Then that same day, sir, you came an' carried me away." Her deep, soft voice breaks in the saying of it. "Just in time, I reckon. An' that is why I am so afraid of men unless they're in a crowd or unless you are near me."

The huddled figure there in the half-light, his head in his hands now, makes no move and says no word. Alice Kibbe draws still further away from him, her heart shaking her body. Her left hand creeps up to her throat; she pulls at her collar as if it were choking her.

"Are you, too, against me now, sir? Are you slippin' away from me? I had to tell you, had to tell you sometime. You have been too good to ask me questions because you thought they would hurt me. Nobody will ever know how many times already I have tried to say it to you, an' couldn't. But to-night here where the light is dim, an' maybe—I don't know—because the waves out there somehow made me think of little children, it came to me to tell you, an' before I knew it I was tellin' you. My father used to say that friends should have no secrets from each other. You were my friend, my one friend, in such a long time; since I left home, I think. You were my one friend then, sir, in all the world.

"So now you know, sir. You gave up your place

in the Home for me. I heard about you soldiers in the Home there—how jolly you were an' everything; how peaceful an' how proud. You knew you were safe from anything very cruel, an' that people liked an' respected you. I heard how you all sat around playin' checkers, tellin' stories, smokin' your pipes, an' singin' 'My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean' on moonlight nights in the summertime out under the trees, an' all those other old songs. All that you gave up in a moment for me—I saw you make up your mind in a second. An' why you did it I do not know. It was too much to give for me.

"An' so I have thought, sir, how I could make it up to you a little for all that, an' after a while I said to myself, 'I will make another home for him, if he will only let me, an' cook for him, an' sew, an' sing with him; an' then when he is very old an' I have come by more experience an' sense than I've got now maybe *I'll* have a chance to kind of pay *him* back.' I hope you'll need me *terribly* bad some day, sir, I do for a fact.

"But you must not think I am beggin' for you to like me if you just can't, now. I was only tryin' to let you know I wasn't unthinkin' an' ungrateful. An' I didn't want to have any secrets from you. You just *couldn't* like me very much now, could you, sir?"

He does not raise his head, but his right arm

stretches out and touches her left arm, and she moves quickly very close to him, and her arm goes stealing across his shoulder. "Oh, sir, you *mustn't* do *that*—I feel your whole body shakin'. Oh, not for me, sir, not for me. I'm not worth it."

The little waves run up and tap the ancient gray wall, and run away again. The building lights come half-way across the park from both east and west to dance with them, and the reflections of the regularly spaced gas-lamps on the curbing of the wall show as posts of gold going deep down into the gray water. She is holding his right hand clasped in both of hers.

"Why do you look at the stars so long, sir?"

"Let's go home, child. Though I look at the sky, I have this moment completed three bloody murders, an' begun another."

## *CHAPTER IV*

## *—Furious Affability Man*

THE day before has been tremulous with the July heat, but after all New York is a seaside place, and during the night an exquisitely refreshing coolness has come upon the city. Entering by way of the blue Atlantic and Long Island, much of which is still green in the midsummer months, the sun crosses the salty waters of the East River and slips into two windows of a corner room on the fourth floor of a building in Forty-fourth Street. Let's not call it, please, a tenement, though legally that is what it is.

Constructively two rooms it is, for stretched on a cord running from one wall to the opposite one is a yellow calico curtain, demurely festive with little curlicue figures printed in mulberry red, reaching down five feet, almost to the wooden floor. In the pearly whiteness of the early morning the buff plaster walls are a delicate tan; and the red-legged cot on this side of the curtain with a very white girl asleep on it, and the two-hole gas cooker on the table against the wall, and the soap-box on the floor by the cot with a striped gray ball of fur in it, these, too, the sun is touching with its kindest light.

And the girl wakens just for a moment to look around at everything in this tender illumination. The hands of the alarm-clock on the shelf, at which she glances, do not frighten her. Her great gray eyes take in the silvered scene; she reaches down and strokes the kitten; and drawing a deep breath and moistening her mouth she turns her face toward the darker section of the room and sinks again deep into her ever-flowing stream of dreams, her lips slightly tightened at the corners in a faint smile of perfect content. All is well with Alice Kibbe. She has verified her home; it is still there, and she knows by the very feel of things that on the other side of the curtain lies Easley Wheatley.

At six the quietness is shattered by the demoniac doings of the alarm-clock, and Alice's home is shocked into tumultuous action. Jeb Stuart leaps from his box with his tail a thick furry curve; Alice hurls back the half of a gray cotton blanket; and Easley Wheatley shouts, "Throw the thing out of the window." But presently he is taking a sponge-bath in a galvanized wash-tub in a corner of his "room," and Alice Kibbe is busy with breakfast preliminaries, Jeb Stuart having had his and being now zealously engaged in washing his face with his left paw.

"Can we afford bacon this morning, Cap?" She almost shouts it in that vast deep voice of hers as if

the senior partner were really in another room. She often addresses him gaily as "Cap" in memory of his steamboat days.

"Well, child, if you wish."

"No, no, it's you I'm thinkin' about. Bacon is terribly, terribly high up here, but I thought you might need somethin' hearty, for I'll just bet you won't eat very much of a lunch."

"How about oatmeal, my Treasurer-General? That is both hearty and cheap."

"An' I like it better, I certainly do."

The gray kitten, having completed his amateur young toilet, is jumping at the tassels of Alice Kibbe's bath-robe. "Jeb Stuart is chargin' me as if I were the enemy, sir. Maybe it's the blue of this bath-robe. Call him in there to you. I'll step on him if you don't."

Mr. Wheatley, cold in the water that has stood all night in the tub, is whooshing and chattering his teeth and singing something or other about an old white horse tearing through the woods, and he is unable to call off the impulsive Jeb. But soon he is bathed and shaved and dressed; and Alice Kibbe is bathed and combed and brushed and dressed; and the oatmeal has had twice the time on the fire called for by the directions on the box, the coffee has boiled up the appointed three times and been set aside to clear, and breakfast is in progress. There

are two bowls of oatmeal with butter, two cups of coffee with hot milk and sugar, and a roomful of that magic something which makes home.

"What *is* the name of the place you work, Cap? I keep forgettin' it, though I remember the street number."

"Petrie's Painless Dental Parlors." There is a corroding acid in his voice as he pronounces the name, and a gleam in his sea-blue eyes.

"You've been there almost a month now, an' I've never visited you once. I'd like to see where you work, sir."

"No, no, child. It's not a very nice neighborhood, though the dental parlor—I don't know why they say parlors—is all right, an' my position is entirely satisfactory. No, you be the housekeeper an' I'll be the business man." He sees he has shown too much concern. "They are great tooth-snatchers, Alice Kibbe; before you knew it they'd have you up in a chair an' have out three or four of those marvelous strong white teeth of yours an' be asking you for five dollars." He smiles so eagerly at her that she is compelled to smile in return.

"Just what do you do, sir? I've never rightly understood, though you've tried to tell me several times, I know."

"Well, I'm the affability man, Alice Kibbe. I welcome the patients, direct their falterin' steps up the

stairs in the direction of the chairs, an' make myself generally useful. It's a very fine position for one of my small experience in dentistry. Shall I bring home a loaf of that good Graham bread you like so much?"

And retreating still further from the subject of his work, Mr. Wheatley reaches down and raises to his lap Jeb Stuart of Kips Bay, and soon he is in the usual hurried excitement of departure—and safe from dangerous questions.

Arriving at Dr. Simon Petrie's Painless Dental Parlors at 7:45, the old soldier removes his coat, hangs it on a nail in the back of the long shabby back room, and begins sweeping out the place. Only one of the four dentists has come in. He sits in an operating-chair smoking a cigarette. He talks at Mr. Wheatley in the bantering tone a smart young man uses to a bootblack. Mr. Wheatley has already schooled himself not to notice these tones. He must hold the job, at least until he can find another, if only he can ever get the time to look for another without endangering by his absence the one he has. But it is not too hard to ignore all the unpleasant things connected with it, which, if he let them into his heart, would break down his personal dignity and kill his spirit; not too hard, no, for in an emergency he needs only to recall the sound of Alice Kibbe's voice up there in Central Park and to raise up in his mind the picture of her in her new home.

Shortly after nine, heaving a sigh, he puts on the long, thick, dingy, red woolen overcoat that he wears on the sidewalk as a ballyhoo man. Made for his predecessor, its sleeves reach to the end of Mr. Wheatley's thumbs and the skirts almost to his toes. On his chest and on his back in letters of gilt braid is the name, Petrie's Painless Dental Parlors. The sleeves and the whole abominable length of the coat down the front are daubed with more thick gilt braid. Picking up a handful of circulars and pulling on the atrocious red woolen cap that matches the obscene coat, he goes cautiously down two flights of stairs to the sidewalk, holding up the skirts of the coat to save himself from stumbling.

Back and forth he marches, ten feet north and ten feet south, calling out something, anything, that might make passers-by look at him and read the name of Petrie's Painless Dental Parlors, snapping his fingers as he walks. If a victim hesitates, Mr. Wheatley hands him a circular and points up the dark narrow stairs. Whether he called out anything or not the coat and cap would attract attention. That's what they were made for, and that's why they have to be worn by the sidewalk ballyhoo man in summer as well as in winter.

The July heat comes in with a rush as the day rises and the crowds thicken on the sidewalk. The rubbery odor of cooking asphalt hangs heavy in

the windless air by two o'clock. Wherever a pair of truck-horses stand for five minutes their shoes are printed on the softened pavement. People are uncomfortable, irritable, often cruel. A man accidentally jostled turns with upper lip curled back like a fighting dog's. A woman steps viciously on the heels of another in front of her.

Mr. Wheatley in his red overcoat is in hell. Long ago his underclothing was wet, and he feels the perspiration pushing stingingly out of his pores. From time to time a warm rivulet streams down the valley of his back, and his flesh crawls with it. His usually pale face is flushed red, his throat is too dry to shout the ballyhoo stuff he has been taught, but he mumbles it somehow. His nerves are worn and agonizingly sensitive. The elevated trains roar and thunder and rattle shatteringly above him. The long overcoat seems to draw in closer to him like a vast plaster.

Along about 2:30 a passing man who has gone beyond the articulate stage of intoxication stops and points a quivering finger at the old soldier burning in the red overcoat. He says no word; he only points furiously. On a New York street where one man stops to look all look, and many stop to continue looking. A crowd begins gathering in a semicircle. It enlarges. It thickens with new particles of humanity flying to it and sticking. It quickly extends

itself and now entirely surrounds the maddened old man, cutting off retreat to the stairway.

What to do? Nothing. The orders are to attract as much attention as possible but by no means to become entangled with the police. This sidewalk ballyhoo business is a public nuisance, but it goes on if the police are not compelled to notice it. A fight would lose him his job, would endanger Alice Kibbe's new home. There must be no fight.

Lights blaze far back in the old cavalryman's eyes. The crowd pushes ever from the outer edge of the ring, closes in on him more tightly, more suffocatingly, outraging his personal pride with its pressure of bodies. His fingers fumble at the top button of the overcoat, and drop away. He seems to see himself dragging off that damnable thing and beating at a section of the staring foolish faces, and kicking their shins, and blasting a way through them to a breath of air and away from their vile touch.

Steady! In a moment some one will turn and walk away, then the mob will dissolve as quickly as it gathered; he has seen that happen before. But it is getting hotter with all their bodies pressing close in upon him. He smells old clothes, the sourness of old sweat. His head is whirling a little. He can move in no direction now. He stands perfectly still, perfectly straight, looking northeastward over their

heads, toward Alice Kibbe's home. If only he can hold out a few minutes longer! Steady! That's an old word he often uses these days.

And then some one behind him pushes him. Some one at his side snatches off his cap. His white hair shines in the sun. Steady, Easley Wheatley, steady! Coming back across forty years, that old caution steels his nerves. There is nothing to gain here to compare with what might be lost. *Too* much to lose!

If a policeman would only drift into sight a block away this mob would dissolve like smoke in the wind. A kick comes from behind him. His right hand leaps to the top button of the red overcoat. He opens his mouth, but checks the curses that crowd upon his tongue. Steady, Easley Wheatley! A hand reaches around his shoulder and snatches at his ear.

"Alice, child, I can stand no more." Did he say the words, or merely think them? He does not know. Two hands fly to the buttons of the hampering overcoat, and drop once more to his side. He stands up straight, his heels together, and looks over the rim of the jostling circle to the northeast. The sweat pours down from his forehead. It gathers in his eyebrows and dribbles down upon his eyelashes. It runs along the tiny canalled wrinkles at the outer corners of his eyes and dims his vision. He cannot see clearly now, except with the eyes of his mind, and they see a tall, very white girl, smiling in con-

tent, going about a small room touching everything as tenderly as if it were alive and very lovely and entirely lovable.

There is a commotion on the edge of the crowd. Somebody is breaking in. The police at last! So the old man tells himself. Now he can ease his muscles a little. The tension has held too long. As he relaxes he gives way too much, too much. His eyes see all things whirling. His head throbs. Steady, Easley Wheatley—he knows he's falling and reaches out his hands to break the shock of collision.

"Daddy, I'm here! It's Alice." And the big white girl, her elbows working like pistons, her gray eyes blazing, is quickly through the crowd. And has her left arm around his shoulder. And a policeman is in sight, and the crowd is swiftly melting away.

"Daddy, look at me! Speak to me, sir! Are you all right? Oh, won't you say a word? It's Alice Kibbe."

"Why, Alice, child! You did say you wanted to pay me a visit, didn't you? But I didn't think it would be to-day."

"Yes, an' you said, sir, you said you were an affability man."

This is the first time she has called him "daddy," and he is very proud.

## *CHAPTER V*

### *—Alice Kibbe, Strategist*

You are asked to contemplate this Alice Kibbe doing secret service, and very uneasy about it; the time being September and the air just browning at the edges with the acid of winter.

On that dreadful July day of discovery Mr. Wheatley ceased to be, by resignation promptly given, any longer an affability man. He went up to the Painless Dental Parlors and laid aside the red badge of slavery, while Alice waited sternly at the bottom of the stairs for him; and then they started home in the middle of the afternoon. "Retreat," Mr. Wheatley said, and not too solemnly. "But in good order." And something wistful, gay, and very gallant was upon his smiling lips. "I am used to that; we will fight again, Alice Kibbe."

They were swinging bravely up Fifth Avenue, he snapping his fingers with a great show of spirit. She had learned to walk on his left side to give his right arm free play.

"You deceived me, Cap; you deceived the junior partner." She gave his arm an energetic shake.

"It shall never happen again, Alice Kibbe. From now on I shall always tell you the worst."

"That is best, sir." A passing man turned to see her bend over and make an atrocious mouth at Mr. Wheatley, purring velvet laughter deep in her throat while she did it.

Then followed days and days of the same thin program for Mr. Wheatley: up at six, breakfast at seven, out to answer advertisements at eight; lunch at a dairy restaurant or free-lunch counter; hours sitting on park benches studying those finely printed columns in the morning newspapers headed, "Help Wanted—Male"; home again at six; more study of the same columns of the afternoon papers until bedtime.

Have you ever considered why it is that the more serious park benchers scrutinize those finely printed columns so long? You would think they could locate within ten minutes every advertisement that applied to them. Yes, indeed; but when you have wasted much time and much precious car-fare fruitlessly answering advertisements you begin studying them as if they were the most abstruse problems, in the hope that among the fine print you will discover some hidden clues that will indicate in advance whether the job is anything within your reach.

It occurred to the old soldier once that he might with justice ask for the return of most of the con-

siderable money he had paid into the Choiseul Confederate Home, since he had received so little of what in reality it had been accepted as payment for, and especially since he needed it so badly; but he put aside the thought at once and was forever done with it. The money was in the form of a gift; it was not in him to ask for its return. But even if the circumstances had permitted that, he would not have asked because it might worry Alice Kibbe if any one down there knew where he was and probably also where she was.

More than once Mr. Wheatley took on jobs that were no better than his affability position; but they were only for short periods, and he gambled on not being caught by his partner, who threatened the most terrible things to herself if he did not refuse all work that "hurt him inside." He had argued with her that nothing but bugs and too much or too little or too bad food and drink could hurt a philosopher inside, but she had waved his sophistries aside.

Nevertheless, for ten days he walked the streets with sandwich boards suspended from his shoulders fore and aft proclaiming the alleged low prices and high qualities of the viands served in a new vegetarian restaurant. Then he was conscripted into a Roman army at a theater, receiving five dollars a night simply for carrying a javelin and twenty pounds of tin armor on and off the stage, telling

Alice that he was doing watchman's duty until midnight in a bank where there was a hundred million dollars; but after a week the ghost did not walk for that show, and Mr. Wheatley retreated again to the park benches. For two days he had dedicated himself to the distribution of breakfast-food samples, for two weeks to telephone directories, for three days to the demonstration of a new razor-strop in a drug-store window (and to wondering what he'd say if Alice came prowling along that block window-gazing). Such had been the nature and almost the entire extent of Mr. Wheatley's public services since Petrie's Painless Dental Parlors.

Meanwhile the menu in Alice Kibbe's home declined to skimmed milk (brought home in a bucket), cornmeal mush, and stewed apples; a diet inexpensive, notorious for its calories, easy to prepare, and not hard to eat, at first.

"What I like, Alice Kibbe, about our diet now," Mr. Wheatley once said at breakfast, "is that it makes me feel so virtuous, in the classic sense, of course. If only you had let me keep my affability job, now we—"

"Never you mind your affability job, Cap, an' never you mind your virtue in the classic sense, which will take care of itself, I have no doubt; for tomorrow we have skimmed milk, cornmeal mush, an' stewed apples. We have fifteen dollars an' sixty-

five cents left, not countin' of course the sacred fifty dollars held in reserve, as you say, for the last stand. Besides, winter is comin', an' pretty soon we'll have to buy a heatin'-stove an' coal on top of everything else. No, sir, we're not goin' to eat our heads off now."

"All right, all right, my Treasurer-General; let's keep our heads whatever happens. I'll stand by you till the cows come home."

"With the skimmed milk, sir?"

"Good for you, Alice Kibbe. The morale of the Army of the Right is holdin' up, I see. Now the Army of the Left will proceed, as per previous plans, in the attempt to outflank an' capture, baggage, paymaster, an' all, a high-toned position that will not injure the said army inside."

Wherefore you are asked this September Monday morning to contemplate Alice Kibbe preparing to begin secret service work, and very uneasy about it. Mr. Wheatley gone for the day, she rushes at her housework, conquers it, leaves a full saucer of milk for Jeb Stuart, and is down in Forty-fourth Street by 8:30, forging westward with long strides against a wind with hints of winter in it, with quick roses in it, too, for Alice Kibbe's white cheeks. Southward on Third Avenue to Twenty-seventh Street, westward half a block, into the vestibule of a flat-house, then a ringing of a bell marked "Lippert." A clack-

ing of the door-latch says, "Come on up." Two flights up, slowly now, and presently Mr. Wheatley's tall Army of the Right, bare-headed and white-aproned, is in Mrs. Lippert's over-stuffed but softly comfortable living-room, that gentle grandmother standing and looking up at her through steel-rimmed spectacles.

"So now I go to store, Alice—Miss Alice, I mean —to help Mr. Lippert. I here again by eleven of the clock to cook dinner. Den we eat; also I take Mr. Lippert's dinner around corner to him. So short the distance is his coffee be hot yet if I heat thick cup first. I stay whiles to help him, maybe till two of the clock. By den school-boy comes to store. He can sell groceries so good as me, also he deliver groceries. I home again long time before three of the clock. Maybe we take Emil und Christina over by park. Maybe you go round block four or five times. I know not; we see how weather is. Sundays, holidays, you know, you free, because store closes den. I hope you like dis yob, Miss Alice. Emil und Christina goot kinder. He drei years, she little more as one. I go now, Miss Alice."

And smiling eagerly, Mrs. Lippert backs out. So this is what Alice Kibbe has done—contracted to be a part-time nurse-girl. You would know that she would try for something that involved working with women and children, she still living in terror of men,

except in crowds or when Mr. Wheatley is with her. Six dollars a week, mind you, and she can be at home when he leaves and when he returns.

Secret service? Yes, but secret only for this first week. Maybe, after all, the work will somehow be impossible; in which case instant flight from it. But if all goes well for these first six days, if the conclusion of the initial period of secret service be celebrated with a chicken dinner next Saturday night in place of mush and stewed apples, perhaps Mr. Wheatley will look kindly on her job. Please contemplate this Alice Kibbe, diplomat and dramatist, presenting her partner with a feast after a fast, a *fait accompli,* and a confession. Dear me, and she looks so sweet and straightforward and altogether without guile and cunning; she with those great, round, wide-open, gray eyes of hers too.

No, and that is not the worst. Emil and Christina, indeed goot kinder, require almost no attention; he on the rug playing with methodic thoroughness with four sets of mechanical toys in turn, and Christina recumbent near-by studying his every movement, occasionally beating her hands together, as who should say, "Give me something this minute to tear to pieces." And as Alice Kibbe sits by the window in a deep wine-red chair she is deliberately plotting to take advantage of her partner's gross physical instincts.

After that dinner of chicken and rice and coffee next Saturday night he will be lolling back in the low-hung canvas chair. Instead of filling his pipe as usual, she will hand him—oh, won't his blue eyes open!—a cigar! And he hasn't had one in ages. She will strike the match and light it as he puffs, and then she will slip down on her knees and rest her elbows on his knees, her chin resting in her left hand.

Up to this time she will not have told him anything about her secret service. If he should have asked with a severity too terrible to be true what this wickedly extravagant dinner means, and whether the Army of the Right has gone mad, she will have evaded answering. But when he has eaten that incredible dinner, and is lying back in his chair, and is relaxed with his guards down and is at peace, and smoking the Cigar, she will begin.

She will explain how she ran about answering want-ads she had seen in the day-old papers he left at home, how nothing had come of all that effort, how by accident while she was foraging down Lexington Avenue looking for cheap apples she had heard Mrs. Lippert in her husband's grocery store telling a neighbor and customer that she needed a little help, and then how splendidly the position has turned out. Yes, and explain it eloquently too; after which she will extend her inevitable

left hand to play gently with the fingers of his right.

"You will let me keep on, sir, won't you? I like it. It actually isn't work at all. An' I'll be home Sundays an' holidays an' *all* the time you're here. An' Mrs. Lippert, you should see *her;* she's a darlin'. May I keep on, sir? It's fun for me; it is, sir, for a fact."

At this point in her imaginative forecast a slow, infinitely sweet smile spreads over her face, and she raises her head and shapes her mouth as for a kiss. Good gracious, let's not contemplate this crafty creature any longer. For shame, Alice Kibbe!

Wednesday afternoon being bright and warm, Mrs. Lippert guides the secret service agent to Madison Square Park. Emil solemnly feeds the fearless pigeons walking about behind the iron fence, Christina sits in state in her pram, Mrs. Lippert and Alice bask in the sun on a bench.

"Now you know de way," says Mrs. Lippert, "you come here by yourself mit Emil und Christina, maybe, Miss Alice, sometime, hey? I like it here. You see many peoples pass. Over dere by Fifth Avenue hundreds carriages und cabs go by, also you see automobile every few minutes. Sure, I like it, but most times I stay by Mr. Lippert in store if you be mit Emil and Christina."

It is after two o'clock; the jolly young people who fill Madison Square Park during the noon hour on

pleasant days are back at work in their offices nearby; and most of those now on the benches are no longer young and have the air of having sat on them a long time. They gaze at the want-ads in the newspapers. They look enviously at busy people who pass swiftly through the park to and from Broadway, Fifth Avenue, and Fourth Avenue, obviously on their way to some definite place to do some definite work. Across the concrete walk from Alice and Mrs. Lippert there is a long line of silent students of the finely printed columns in the newspapers.

It occurs to Alice that perhaps *her* partner spends hours and hours in public parks among dingy disillusioned men. He isn't dingy and he isn't hopeless, but he must have to kill a great deal of time somewhere. She has visualized him going from one office or store to another, waiting comfortably in a reception-room, and then being respectfully received. How could any one receive *him* in any other way? He has spoken several times of sitting in hotel lobbies; she has thought that his spare time has been given to those luxurious leather chairs in marble halls, such as she has seen on their gay piratical promenades about town. She gives the faces of the benchers opposite her a fearful scrutiny, and turning looks searchingly at the sides and backs of those sitting around the circular fence behind her inclosing a bit of green grass and a few trees.

From time to time a sandwich-man comes into the park, eases off his boards, and rests for a few minutes before going on with his promotion work. A man blacked up and with red lips painted far out into his cheeks, and wearing a long oil-cloth coat with an advertisement painted on the back, drifts in and sits near the children. Presently, while she is again studying the backs of the men on the far side of the circle behind her, Alice feels Mrs. Lippert shaking, hears her tittering explosively, and receives the round little woman's elbow in her side. A man has just passed made up as a stage countryman, wearing a wide straw hat flopped down over his head, brown duster, and boots with his trousers tucked in their tops. Mrs. Lippert points at his back, her plump body quivering. Painted on the duster in red letters is the legend: "They move me—they'll move you"; and just below that is "Quimber's Pills."

"Don't *laugh,* Mrs. Lippert." Alice Kibbe's face is furious.

"I laugh at de words, child; not at de poor man."

The walking man keeps his hands busy giving out circulars to passers-by. Far up the line he drops on a bench wearily. Dreadful fatigue sits with him, and a visible shame. Alice refuses to look at him again, though Mrs. Lippert reports that when he leans over to rest his face on his hand his chin-

whiskers touch the concrete walk. Alice Kibbe maintains a stony silence.

Presently Mrs. Lippert, unaccountably subdued by her nurse-girl, is silently tatting, and Alice is helping Emil feed the pigeons that wait patiently just beyond his reach behind the iron fence. So far they have wheedled him out of no less than seven peanuts; and Alice Kibbe tells his grandmother, with a smile, that he will be a rich man some day.

At 3:30 Mrs. Lippert rolls up her tatting, sighs, "Ya, ya," and raises her short body with a grunt. "Come, Miss Alice, we go home now. Don't you be mad mit me, child; I have to laugh at dat feller. He is so *terrible.* Look, look, he goes also!"

The man in the brown duster has risen and is walking rapidly twenty feet ahead of them, limping a little in his right leg and snapping his thumb against his second finger. But Alice, angrily snatching her arm away from Mrs. Lippert's plucking fingers, still refuses to look even once in his general direction.

In the course of time it is Saturday afternoon; Alice's first period of secret service comes to an end; she is loaded with six dollars plus six freshly cooked almond cakes, and arrives at home before five o'clock, having done her shopping on the way. By 5:50 Jeb Stuart has been so thoroughly fed that he

lies dormant on a rug in a corner, the sewing-table with the folding legs is out in the center of the room (white cloth and dishes supplied by Woolworth), the ground coffee is in the pot, the lettuce is washed, the dressing made, the rolls are warming, the rice is beautifully light and fluffy; the chicken, already brown and tender, is in a hot dish on the two-hole gas cooker. And Alice Kibbe is so nervous that she can scarcely do anything for fumbling at her breast-pin with her left hand.

She looks again at the cigar on the shelf behind the clock. Yes, it appears to be a good one; the man said it was. Goodness knows, it ought to be; it cost twenty-five cents just for one. She looks at herself again in the bumpy mirror hanging on the wall and touches her hair here and there rapidly, making no visible change in it thereby but surely giving herself some strange sweet satisfaction by making the motions. She smooths out the folding wrinkles in a lacy-edged and embroidered apron looking almost as large as a handkerchief on her. She brushes a hint of flour off her blue gingham dress, pulls up a sagging stocking, makes a face at her slippers redeemed momentarily with polish, and stands by the door to listen for a certain step on the stair.

Now let Mr. Wheatley come on, and hope to escape giving consent to Miss Alice Kibbe's wish to continue as a proud wage-earner. Down in the foggy

river near-by there is some altercation among tugs and ferry-boats, no doubt as to right of way, and their hoarse whistles are bellowing so furiously at each other that she despairs of hearing her partner before he actually knocks at the door.

At some moment while she stands there waiting for him, Alice Kibbe, for the first time, looks at the situation altogether from his side. The pink fades out of her cheeks, her round gray eyes stare in front of her, her mouth opens a little, her left hand creeps up to her throat. Heretofore she has thought of him considering the matter of her in relation to outside work only with reference to its safety and pleasantness for her. And so he would, of course; but what else might come into his mind when she makes her great revelation within the next hour?

Suddenly she sees that he will probably believe she has lost faith in him, that her dear secret when exposed will pierce him like a dagger. Wound her partner? Take the *slightest* chance of hurting *him?* Alice Kibbe to do *that* to Mr. Wheatley, who down yonder last spring . . . She lays her forehead against the wall and beats the weak plaster with her sturdy fists until a piece of it falls at her feet. "Oh, daddy, I didn't mean to hurt you, I didn't for a fact." And in her mind she sees herself resigning secret service work Monday morning; if she can't tell him about it she can't keep it.

And then she hears his two long and two short knocks on the door.

"Not yet, sir; just a minute, *please.*"

She dashes to the sink, dabbles her eyes with cold water, touches up her hair again, tries a miserable smile into the bumpy mirror by way of practice, and busies herself at the table holding the gas cooker.

"All right, Cap; come in, an' welcome to our home."

Just inside the door he stops sharply.

"Alice Kibbe, do I smell fried chicken? Fried chicken after a century of mush! Tell me quick. It's the suspense that kills."

"Yes, sir, it is chicken." Her voice is flat, without its usual accent and emphasis of gaiety. Feeling that, she tries her smile on him, but she knows that it is a failure, and she bends over to look hard into the rice-boiler.

"Alice Kibbe, why do you hold your head down, an' why is your face so sickly white, an' why is your voice so small?"

"I'm a wickedly extravagant creature, Cap, that's why. I've been squashin' you whenever you said a word about mush, an' here I've gone an' spent two dollars an' ninety-nine cents for nothin' on earth but good food. Don't look at me, please."

"Alice Kibbe, I see a drop of water glistenin' on

your nose like a star. Is it a tear? There, there, child, don't you worry. This dinner will be worth its weight in gold for our morale. An army is lost when its morale is gone. It's not extravagance at all. Besides, the Army of the Left has captured twelve dollars this week an' saved ten of it. If you don't believe it here it is. An', look, you so dressed up, Alice Kibbe! God bless our souls, you're as beautiful as a queen. There, there, it's nothin' to worry about, child. I swear it isn't."

And the partners cling to each other for a moment, the tall girl pretending to straighten his tie and smooth his white hair.

"Was it good work, then, sir? You know what I mean; it didn't hurt you?"

"Oh, no, indeed not. It was a bit of professional promotion."

"An' I bought you a cigar, too, Cap. Let me get it. See, here it is. I reckon, though, it isn't much good. But the man said it was."

"Oh, that's a fine one. Why, partner! It's a Cabañas! Now let's eat. The air is gettin' chilly these days an' my appetite is a sharp sword."

So the famished partners and blessed liars eat their grand dinner, with immense advantage to the morale of both the Army of the Right and the Army of the Left. He is extraordinarily gay, and even

more gentle with her than usual; he has known about her secret since Wednesday in the park, and now he hopes and believes, with a catch at his heart, that his Alice Kibbe is after all what she is.

## *CHAPTER VI*

## *—The Landlord Attacks*

October saw a diminutive second-hand stove in Alice Kibbe's constructive two rooms, a long pipe with two elbows running to a chimney in the wall, and a coal-box in a corner of Mr. Wheatley's apartment, which was filled with lots of a bushel brought up the two flights of stairs by amiable Pasquale Antonini from around the corner of Second Avenue. The little stove looked an inadequate weapon to fight strong weather with, but Alice Kibbe had a strong faith in it. With it in place and the coal-box full she said to winter, "Now come on, sir; we're ready for you."

But winter was slow to enter New York that year. October was more often warm than cold, except for its stimulating early mornings; and when November stepped forth on the calendar without bringing broadsides of snow and sleet and roaring winds, Alice Kibbe was gratefully surprised. The newspapers told of six-inch snows in the West. She read of thick ice at Devil's Lake, North Dakota; but up to December New York's complexion had been pow-

dered white only twice. And even then a day's sun had worn it off.

Alice Kibbe gave credit for this delightful amiability of the upper elements to her city. New York was even more marvelous than she had thought. Studying the tables of comparative temperatures in the newspapers, she often in conversation with Mr. Wheatley pointed with pride to the fact that New York was almost as warm as Charleston, or San Antonio, or Los Angeles; while Chicago, St. Paul, and Duluth were deep within the ice-line. Sometimes, to be sure, the weather that was out west one day rode the next into her city with keen-edged swords, but it usually moderated its harshness on the raid eastward and it never stayed long.

Mrs. Lippert, her friend still though no longer her employer, warned her that New York's pre-Christmas weather might be respectable enough but that its post-holiday conduct was likely to be a thing to break its lovers' hearts. "You yust wait for Yanuary and February, Miss Alice; den look out."

What worried Mr. Wheatley's partner most was the probable effect of hard weather on him. He could not sit very long on a park bench when the walks underfoot were icy slush and the west wind came lunging with cutlasses. "Well, then," he had said when questioned, "I'll retire to one of my hotels or railroad stations, though no one comes to them

lookin' for help. Besides, in them I'm always incog; I'm supposed to be a wealthy traveler an' a gentleman of leisure."

"But do they let anybody come in an' sit around in the hotels just whenever they want to, sir?"

"If you don't look too disreputable, an' if you don't use one place too often, it's all right. Between Twenty-third and Forty-second Streets there are six or eight hotels that I patronize; at both ends of Twenty-third there are ferry-houses with warm waitin'-rooms; an' then there's always the Grand Central Station. Also, there are the big department-stores with loungin'-rooms that are not filled to suffocation by busy men. I often sit in them waitin' patiently for an imaginary female relative doin' a lot of fancy shoppin'."

"Why not come home an' wait, sir; I hate to think of you bein' where you aren't wanted."

"Oh, well, I might hear of somethin' outside where a lot of people are; you never can tell. Once I got two weeks of good work out of a stray conversation I heard at Wanamaker's store; you remember, when I helped distribute telephone-books. Now, don't you worry about these places not wantin' me. They're too big to care much about a single individual one way or the other. They don't burn a pound more of coal because of me, an' their benches an' chairs might as well be used as not. I help to make these

places look popular. That's always a good thing for them."

Sundays the partners spent together; and in the morning, having heard the music of the choir and the amiable wisdom of the preacher in some gorgeous church along Fifth Avenue, they sometimes gave the afternoons of ugly days to a round of hotels; innocent freebooters of simple pleasures. They would stay a good while with the old-fashioned amplitude and warmth of the Manhattan; Alice Kibbe liked the silent, portly, white-haired men smoking their cigars and reading their papers. The pirates of pleasure would sit in the time-stained, ornate lobby of the Murray Hill watching the people come and go; on to an ancient, pompous hostelry in Thirty-fifth Street to have a look at the comical knee-pants of the miserable attendants, for whose sake Alice Kibbe was always indignant. Then came the climax of the afternoon: the old Waldorf as it was when this twentieth century was young and loud and bravely gaudy.

Mr. Wheatley always preferred to go around into Thirty-third Street so that they could enter on that side. Threading their way certainly through the intersecting passages, they strolled down Peacock Alley and sank into deep chairs wherever they could find them. Music from distant dining-rooms came to them. Mr. Wheatley savored the excellence of the cigar smoke; Alice enjoyed the promenade of the

rich fabrics and singing colors. It was only a step to the comparative quietness of the distinguished Hoffman House; to the light-yellow elegance of the Seville, where many Latin-Americans were to be seen; and on to the famous Fifth Avenue Hotel, at Twenty-third Street, its vast lobby always full of politics, subdued excitement, and many men. At night to church again. Their one-room home wasn't very large, really.

Overcoats and cloaks cover many sartorial sins, but with or without them neither the white-haired old soldier with his air of assurance unassumed nor the tall, radiant, gray-eyed girl worried greatly about their clothes when they were raiding New York for harmless entertainment that deprived no one else of anything. Among the city's millions they now felt themselves to be alone, and so insignificant as to be beyond critical scrutiny; obscurely free and independent and when together very happy.

All during December Mr. Wheatley had steady employment in a Fourth Avenue hardware store; he had hopes of its continuing, though he did not tell Alice Kibbe that; and the Christmas of the partners was a thing that touched them deeply. This year Mr. Wheatley was himself again. He gave Alice a pair of slippers with buckles on them and a pair of black silk stockings with white clocks in them, and she gave him a pair of thick gloves; both

their gifts were surprises nothing short of thrilling.

But January began badly. When stock-taking in the hardware store was over Mr. Wheatley's job was gone. Most of the time the sun gave itself to other regions than New York. Now came snow and ice and maniac winds from the north and west. The little red-eyed stove ate up coal at a monstrous rate. The old diet of mush, skimmed milk, and stewed apples came back, varied sometimes with cabbage or turnips. Getting about in the streets was increasingly difficult, so that Mr. Wheatley spent more and more troubled hours in unprofitable hotel lobbies and railroad stations. Twice during that winter he fell behind with the rent, was threatened with eviction by the landlord, finally paid, and stayed on.

February was no improvement over January, March but little, April was not so bad, May was friendly, and June was beautiful. One morning in that famous month people passing along East Forty-fourth Street saw a pile of household goods on the curb, some of them spilling over into the gutter. The small pile gave an impression of completeness. "This is *all*," it said. Arranged in and for a home up there in the tenement above, it had surely had a certain size and dignity and significance. Coming down the stairs, all that had somehow diminished. Flung there on the curb, its dignity had disappeared. The badge of home had been stripped from it. No

moving-van was in sight, the disorder of the heap plainly said "Dispossessed," and shrewd housewives of the neighborhood circled searchingly about it to see what things in it might be desirable to them. They smelled an early auction sale of these piled-up bones of Alice Kibbe's home.

You would know that her partner would not let her stay to see it torn to pieces and set out on the curb like so much rubbish by the official dispossess veterans. Before those swift shock troopers arrived the Armies of the Right and Left were retreating southward on a Third Avenue elevated train, with light baggage indeed: two blankets, a coffee-pot, a frying-pan, a few tin dishes, a sack of provisions, and a large perforated pasteboard box which now and then let out an inquiring "Miaow?" Easley Wheatley had never before worn an air of greater assurance, nor Alice Kibbe one of steadier faith.

It was very early in the morning, the business-bound crowds had not yet come out in numbers, Mr. Wheatley and Alice had boarded the first car, and they had it almost to themselves. Somewhere out across the East River was the sun, as yet only a pinkly luminous thing behind thin white clouds; but the lights of the train were on, and the old soldier pulled out of his pocket and spread on his lap a map of Long Island showing Brooklyn in detail.

"A good retreat, Alice Kibbe, is a battle half won.

A momentarily defeated army may retire into the woods, rest and recuperate, reshape its ranks, and then come out again, have better luck, and in the end give a very favorable account of itself. If it hadn't been for the rent payments the Armies of the Right and Left could have done pretty well, thank you, even during the present disgustin' business depression. Well, I see here on the map much territory that is wooded; I verified the fact by inquiry last night. Long Island is full of trees. Warm weather is with us, and more is to come. We are retreating once more, but in good order of course, this time to the tall timber; we will fight again. What says the Army of the Right?"

"Forward!"

"O brave word! Lucky me to have a partner equal to sayin' it so, now! Anyway, child, we can find a place where we may catch our breaths again for a few days. I thought that landlord was bluffin'; but I reckon he wanted to get rid of me. He caught me nappin', an' there was nothin' else to do but to retreat. We'll let him take our stuff to pay his old rent; it will more than do that."

Like many another inhabitant of Manhattan, Mr. Wheatley had never been to Brooklyn. On the map it stretched out prodigiously in all directions, and there were several blots of speckled green promis-

ing trees. Some of these, alas, were labeled as cemeteries, which the doughty old soldier eliminated with a wry smile. Prospect Park appeared to be a sizable piece of woods; it was near-by; and though he had no hope that a park could afford anything but temporary relief, it was, as he told Alice Kibbe, their first objective. Trolley-cars swarmed under the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn Bridge, bearing strange names on their fronts. A policeman directed him to a Flatbush Avenue car, and by eight o'clock the Armies of the Right and Left had boldly invaded Prospect Park, finding it all but deserted.

They marched on down a green road, gray squirrels barking at them from tree-trunks, the warm white sun spreading through the woods all about them. Away down in the park, in a lonely spot, they unloaded their baggage on a bench, and Alice Kibbe gave Jeb Stuart the air on a string. He stalked a squirrel as far as his leash would permit. Then he sharpened his claws on a tree-root, sniffed inquiringly at every item of his strange new environment, and came to rest purring in Alice Kibbe's ample lap.

"I think, sir, I'm goin' to like this summer, I do for a fact." As was her habit, she nodded her head several times to reinforce her affirmation. "If it's goin' to be like this." She drew in a slow deep breath of air as if she were tasting it, and being constitu-

tionally unable to wink one eye alone she scrunched up both of them at Mr. Wheatley in a gesture of delighted approval.

The rising sun and their walking had finely beaded Alice's upper lip with perspiration. She pulled off the old checked cap she was wearing and laid it on her knee. She thought of the treasured things of wearing apparel she had slowly achieved and then had left behind: the nightgowns, corset-covers, and other beautiful, lacy, beribboned things she had worked bits of herself into during those long waiting hours at home in Forty-fourth Street; the brown felt hat with the fur on it (a thrilling bargain from a great store, and how it did become her!); and then the blue crêpe de Chine dress (another swagger bargain and her only silk frock). Well, her partner hadn't thought at all about clothes in the hurry of their retreat; and she must think as little as she could. If she had only taken thought she could have left a bundle of the nice things with Mrs. Lippert the night before and called for them later. Oh, dear, that was the way with her; she thought of the brilliant things only afterward. But, anyway, no power on earth could have made her leave behind the slippers with the buckles and the black silk stockings with the white clocks; wrapped in many folds of tissue-paper, there they were safe in the provision-sack.

There was clearly in Alice Kibbe's mind, and there probably will be as long as she lives, a picture of that first home she had created. Now it seemed that a shadow of herself was back yonder walking about in it touching everything tenderly—the low-hung canvas chair that Mr. Wheatley luxuriated in of nights, the two-hole gas cooker which had achieved miracles in its time, the loud-ticking round clock that was a terror with its alarm early in the morning though a friendly companion during the day, her own red-legged cot with the bright springs—so many things that had been comrades through old days that now seemed so distant and so dear, days dyed with the very colors of their two lives. But her anxiously watchful partner could detect no regret in her deep soft voice, or see reproach in her eager gray eyes. For Alice Kibbe was—well, Alice Kibbe.

After a long rest they drank from a fountain near-by, restored Jeb Stuart to his box, and started on again. Mr. Wheatley was bearing always southward, though the winding paths made progress difficult because when he wanted to cut directly across a plot of ground he always found near-by a sign saying, "Keep off the Grass." Nevertheless, by noon they were at the lower end of the great park, at that date not nearly so well developed as the upper end. Here indeed was the feeling and the odor of wild woods, with good ground underfoot instead of cin-

ders or concrete, without benches, without grass signs, with not a soul other than themselves visible within an hour.

The old soldier looked about him appreciatingly. After a while he selected a grove of trees, penetrated to its center, arranged the baggage against a tree, and started a fire. Alice walked back fifty yards to bring a can of water. They fried bacon and boiled coffee. That with bread-and-butter sandwiches and marmalade was a feast to them. "We can afford royal fare, Alice Kibbe, if we don't have to pay rent, can't we?" She nodded her head three times in entire approval, saying something about its being a fact; for she was very busy feeding Jeb Stuart.

Mr. Wheatley sat back against a tree, his old black felt hat hung on his left knee, watching the blue smoke from the fire rise and circle, and circle and rise again, with that slow easy grace smoke has on a quiet windless day in the open. Alice Kibbe leaned against another tree, her eyes half closed, the long-legged, striped kitten fighting the string she held idly in her hand.

There was a crackling of twigs behind them. Jeb unfurled his tail to terrifying proportions and presented his curved side as a shield against the approaching enemy. A mounted policeman with an old, old red face and a little goat-beard and bushy gray eyebrows sat looking down at the campers.

"I guess you two think you're five hundred miles or so from New York, don't you? Up in Canada somewhere, maybe? Or down in South Carolina?"

"Oh, yes, it's South Carolina," said Alice Kibbe, looking up at him with round serious eyes. "There isn't a city anywhere near, not even a town."

"Have you seen any deer to-day, or wild turkey?" he asked.

"We thought we saw a deer, an' there are lots of ducks an' squirrels."

"You won't be in here to-morrow, will you?"

"No," said Alice Kibbe, "we've got to be movin' on southward. We won't be here again soon."

"Well, in that case, good-by. If in your travels you come into a public park you won't start a fire and do cooking, will you? It's against the law."

"Never, sir!"

A slow smile spread over her face as she looked up at the old policeman, her left hand creeping up to her white throat. He pointed his finger at her, nodded at Mr. Wheatley, and rode gravely away. And shortly thereafter the Armies of the Right and the Left were retreating southward, in perfect order but losing no time.

Soon the woods of the park began thinning, then stopped suddenly. Mr. Wheatley halted to look at his map, pressed on. Now came long streets and avenues, some as yet unpaved, and houses in clots

further and further apart. Keeping near a track along which trolley-cars went rattling every ten minutes or so, they marched on. Mr. Wheatley would not board a car because, he explained, cars go where people are, whereas he was searching for a place where people "warn't."

As the afternoon wore on, a troubled expression blurred the old soldier's pale, many-lined, snub-nosed face. He had the notion that if you retreat outward from the center of a city or town you must come to woods, if there are any in the section, and Long Island was not a treeless prairie. And yet as he trudged on, the baggage now so heavy that he often staggered, timber signs were as scarce as they were around Forty-fourth Street. Houses had now ceased, and laid-out streets were almost covered with grass and weeds. Of course he knew that somewhere out to the west and south was the Atlantic Ocean, but surely they would see timber before they saw salt water. Alice realized that he was deeply worried, but she could think of nothing helpful to say, so she said nothing. Pulling the black-checked cap down over her eyes, she tramped on silently with Jeb Stuart and the bag of provisions. She was like that.

Late in the afternoon, walking along what was obviously a spur of the main trolley line, they came to a vast area of gray ashes and rubbish, the rails

running along the outer edge of it. Out beyond stretched the low ground that was being filled in. And away beyond it, just above the horizon, gray plumes of smoke lay lengthwise on the wind. Over to their left a creek came up through the brown reeds, its course now marked in red by the late sun. Easley Wheatley showed his partner to a seat on an upturned bath-tub, and he sat down on the iron frame of a machine that would never sing again.

"Miss Alice Kibbe Wheatley, adopted daughter of a senile ass, I have brought you, it seems, not to a merry life in the green woods, but to an ash-heap. That smoke yonder, I know, is from the funnels of passin' ships, an' that creek, I'll bet, runs up from the sea. There are now no woods between us and the Atlantic Ocean. On the creek you see two shacks an' just below them an old scow pulled out on the bank. People probably live in those shacks. If they can live there more or less permanently we can camp for a night on or near the ancient scow. We'll rest here a little, an' then I'll call on you for that gallant word you used back yonder."

"The word is 'Forward,' sir."

While they took their ease, a figure far down at the other end of the long gray line detached itself from its setting, picked up a sack, and moved toward the Armies of the Right and the Left, walking along the foot of the ash-heap. It was a very small

figure wearing a hat with a tall plume, and it carried itself erect and stiff, and took short swift steps, kicking its long skirt vigorously as it progressed toward the two shanties on the creek, a quarter of a mile out of the direct line of winds that blew between the dump and the sea. Passing the armies at rest, she looked up the ten-foot incline, gave them the ghost of a bow, and hurried on. She disappeared within the further shanty. Within fifteen minutes Mr. Wheatley was knocking at her mahogany door, it having once been part of a piano-lid. Opening it, the severely rigid little woman in powdered clothes looked out at him with burning brown eyes under raised eyebrows as white as snow.

"Would any one object, ma'am, to our campin' out here to-night? We thought of goin' down the creek about a hundred yards to that old scow. Is there fresh water anywhere near?"

"I'm sure no one could possibly object. As for the water, there's a hydrant at this end of the ash-line; they keep it there in case of too much fire among the wooden things. It has a wrench on it; just give it a turn and you'll have all the water you want."

"We'll cook supper then," said Mr. Wheatley. "Afterward we'll sleep on the deck of the scow if the ground is too damp. We're obliged, ma'am. I'll go for the water first. Maybe you'll let my daughter sit with you until I come back?"

"*My* name is Bullwinkle," she stated pointedly. "Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle."

"*Mine* is Easley Wheatley, an' my daughter's is Alice Kibbe Wheatley—Miss Alice Kibbe Wheatley."

"An' we're *so* glad to know you, Mrs. Bullwinkle," purred Alice in her deepest voice with the softest flute notes in it. "Now, hurry, sir, an' get the water, or it'll be night before we have supper started."

When Mr. Wheatley came back with a can of water the atmosphere within Mrs. Bullwinkle's front room was entirely changed. Jeb Stuart was delightedly excited about Mrs. Bullwinkle's pet terrapin, whom she called Time; Jeb circled round and round Time tapping him with his left paw and jumping away. Alice sat in a chair with a mended rocker laughing at him, and Mrs. Bullwinkle was rattling things and talking at a great rate in her toy kitchen.

"Yes, I got Time off the heap," she was saying, looking through the door frequently. "He is a real diamond-back from Maryland, I've been told; very rare these days. Some restaurant threw him out thinking he was dead or too small to cook, I suppose; and I picked him up. Everything comes to the dump if you'll only wait for it. Time has been with me now two years. He buries himself when it's cold, but he comes out in warm weather. He's around the house a good deal, and then he goes along the creek

and out among the reeds leading his own life and saying nothing to anybody. I never bother about Time; he looks after himself.

"Please be seated, Mr. Wheatley. Your daughter and I have arranged things since you left. Hospitality, graciously given or graciously received, is a mark of good breeding. You will have dinner with me, if you don't mind. It will be a pleasure to me. Your daughter can sleep inside here with me on the divan to-night, and you can spread your blanket out there on the porch. She tells me you've been a soldier; then you've slept on harder beds, I'm sure. Don't worry about the cat and Time, Miss Alice; nothing hurts Time, it seems. Whatever happens he goes on just the same."

Darkness had indeed come when Mrs. Bullwinkle's dinner was on the table in the front room. While they ate under the yellow light of a coal-oil lamp, a bugle-call just outside rose and went rolling away into the night. Alice Kibbe's face paled, and the old soldier stood up.

"That's only Mr. Farquharson," said Mrs. Bullwinkle in a voice that diminished Mr. Farquharson. "His name is William, but he calls himself Wullie, and so, too, do the other salvagers on the dump. He lives in that other house out there on the creek. Poor Mr. Farquharson! Sit down, Mr. Wheatley, if you please."

Mrs. Bullwinkle shook her small white head; and, looking meaningly at her guests, she tapped her sunken temple. "He is that way. He thinks the stars would not come out if he didn't call them with that old bugle of his. You'll hear him again at midnight; then he's rounding them up, he says. And early in the morning he'll blow them to bed. That's the way he puts it. Poor Mr. Farquharson! Comes from good people too, I've been told."

After dinner Alice insisted on drying the dishes, and then, there being quite enough space for three to sit comfortably in Mrs. Bullwinkle's front room, she told them of herself, hinting at a lineage almost noble, and of Wullie, whose antecedents were a little cloudy but very promising, and of the six other salvagers, all women, who came from a distance to pick salable things out of the rubbish-heap, sometimes bringing their children with them. About the connections of the non-resident salvagers Mrs. Bullwinkle obviously had doubts that amounted almost to certainty. Two of these low-caste creatures sometimes *drank;* and suffered in business thereby, because then they could not discriminate between bits of cast-iron and brass nor judge rightly whether an ancient derby hat still had a nickel in it or nothing whatsoever.

By ten o'clock the moon had come up. Before wrapping himself in his blanket the old steamboat

captain walked down to investigate the discarded scow. Its deck surface was as large as that of a small steamboat. One corner of its blunt stern lay in the water, now at high tide. There was a jagged hole in the port bow two feet above the ground, which should have been boarded up long ago, Mr. Wheatley noted, to keep the rain out of the hull. He judged that an attempt had been made to pull it out on dry land for complete overhauling, and that it had been given up as not worth the trouble.

"But it's a great dry-land craft," the old bayou captain said to himself, smiling. It *was* a boat, anyway, so he liked it, and in his mind he was already calling it the *Old Lame Duck.*

Going back to the narrow Bullwinkle porch, he brought his blanket and bedded himself down for the night on the broad back of the *Old Lame Duck.* The seaward breezes swept across the vast expanse of tall reeds, rattling the brown ones left from last year and swishing the green ones of the new year. Whenever he listened there was sound out among them, always small secret sounds. Countless eager little voices of peeper-frogs swung back and forth in a simple rhythm—fairy sleigh-bells jingling, jingling on away, and as they went thousands more came jingling along. Far off in one direction a glow hung in the sky, and down below it towers of light reached

up into sight—Coney Island, Mrs. Bullwinkle had said. And now and then he saw away off in another direction tiny strings of gold beads drifting just above the horizon—ships passing in the night. The great luminous haze far to the north and west, that would be Manhattan, whence he and Alice had come that day.

Easley Wheatley, evicted, lay on his side, breathing in hungrily the air that was touched with salt. If others could snatch the elements of existence from that long gray line of rubbish slowly advancing toward the Atlantic, why not he? At least for a while. Falling asleep, he saw a superstructure already risen on the deck of the *Old Lame Duck;* a superstructure with even a pilot-house on it, making it look something like a bayou steamboat. The superstructure was constructed of box-boards, pieces of tin and linoleum, an occasional segment of dark oak and brown mahogany, just as the two shanties were. The rain could not get in through it, but the pattering of the drops on the tin were sounds that made one sleep all the sweeter inside. And it was stout enough to withstand any wind.

Across the stern end of the ancient scow was the huge kitchen, which was also a dining-saloon on the seaward side. At the bow end was another—shall we say saloon?—extending across the deck; this was

the living-room, whence steps led up to the pilot-house above. Between the kitchen and the living-room ran a rather wide passage, and on either side of it two spacious cabins. Tall Alice Kibbe would have plenty of housekeeping space, now. The furniture was made of box-boards from the rubbish-heap, transformed into comfortable friendly things by her touch. She went about in it—a new and larger home within sight of the city and the sea—happier even than she had been in the one room on Forty-fourth Street.

The brown reeds ticked in the wind, and the green ones swished; the little bells jingled on away. The glow faded from over Coney Island and dimmed over even Manhattan. The water lapped softly against the *Old Lame Duck*. And the weary old soldier, dreaming of a victory snatched from defeat, slept so deeply that not even Wullie's high calls to his bright flock at midnight and at dawn aroused him. He woke with the sun in his eyes, and Alice Kibbe sitting by his side.

"We didn't know where you'd gone, sir. So I looked for you. Come on; breakfast is ready."

"Alice Kibbe, unless I'm terribly mistaken, the enemy lines are crackin' in the middle."

And then, standing up and draping himself with his gray blanket, he bowed low to her as if presenting a worthy gift.

"Thank you, sir," she said, looking up at him, her gray eyes round and serious. "I do for a fact." And she nodded her head slowly three times and very gravely over her gift, whatever it might be.

## *CHAPTER VII*

## *—Wind of the Morning*

At the end of the long hard summer, for him as usual without vacation, Mr. Badeneau sat up in bed against a pillow at his back and glared at the portly, gray-haired, fresh-faced nurse whenever she made a movement or uttered a word. From the living-room adjoining, the four doctors now in consultation would presently return to the bedside of the tempestuous patient, wherefore Mrs. McWhortle aimed to display a high level of watchful activity; later, when Dr. Peebles took them away, she could relapse into her easy-chair by the window and go on with the story of the princely cowboy and the golden-haired girl from the East dangerously visiting her uncle's ranch. So Mrs. McWhortle tipped about the room rearranging things, picking up a scrap of paper, pushing the drawer of a dresser neatly to, tucking in a bit of sheeting on the bed, asking Mr. Badeneau if he didn't want this or that.

"In God's name, woman, be quiet," he hissed at her, grinding his teeth until the overdeveloped muscles of his jaws showed in outstanding lumps at the

back of his bilious brown cheeks. "None of those things you're doin' is worth doin', an' you know it. You bother me, that's all. I'm tryin' to listen to this idiotic funny piece on the phonograph here. Please put the needle back to the beginnin' of the cylinder an' then have the exquisite kindness to sit over there in your chair by the window, where you were before the doctors came. You're all right. They know you're a marvelous nurse. Read your book. Look down from the window at the passin' crowds on Fifth Avenue this lovely August mornin'. Do anything you please except fuss around. Look over at Delmonico's an' see if anybody is goin' in for lunch yet. But I'll eat mush, I suppose, as usual."

Mrs. McWhortle hadn't the slightest intention of being caught relaxed and at ease with a book. Setting the phonograph needle back to the beginning of the cylinder, she went to the window, leaned her head against the jamb, and looked pensively down at the traffic of Fifth Avenue and Forty-fourth Street. Mr. Badeneau placed the two receivers over his ears and bent forward attentively. The night before he had called in an electrician to rig up a dictograph apparatus running from the living-room to the clumsy, old-fashioned phonograph, which he hadn't used in years; but though the cylinder now turned, what he heard through the ear-pieces was not its alleged humorous words, it was the talk of

the four doctors in the next room. And that devilish woman had caused him to miss something.

"—colitis, infected nerves, prolapsed stomach, constipation, excessively irritable temperament. The vicious circle, gentlemen. I have been treating him off and on for over a year." Dr. Peebles was sketching his case to the impatient consultants summoned from their seaside homes, whence they shouldn't, they felt, have been called in August unless the case was very serious. "I doubt if he would have taken treatment of his own accord; I bullied him into being a patient once after he had gone dizzy and momentarily blind while crossing Fifth Avenue. Mr. Badeneau—his initials, by the way, are B. X., and he furiously conceals what the X stands for, though the very young men in the bank say it means Xerxes —Mr. Badeneau has the worst work he could possibly have for a person of his disposition.

"Though he is only thirty he reached the vice-presidency of the Creole Trust Company so quickly because of one of his always shrewd ideas. He was one of the first, at least in New York, to suggest a separate woman's department for the bank, where they could come, deposit their money (and frequently take it out), ask questions about investments, and so on and on—you know. Such departments are not uncommon now. We conservative directors on the board opposed him; we thought it was

an expense that would not return a profit. Well, he was right and we were wrong. But in revenge, knowing his temper, his enemies on the board maneuvered him into the management of the department. He didn't want that; pride made him take it.

"Probably Mr. Badeneau isn't altogether a misogynist, but he doesn't care for women, at least not women in business. Dear old Mrs. Flimber—you all know *her*—comes to him once a week to ask if she really hadn't better sell the solid bonds and preferred stocks her husband left her and invest the proceeds in something some friend of hers has heard about as being recommended for a swift rise by an acquaintance of hers who knows the wife of the anonymous head of a large Wall Street firm. In his heart Mr. Badeneau has murdered her a hundred times. They aren't all like that of course; but it's a minority that is marvelously persistent and articulate. He has stuck to the job, nevertheless, and he has put over his department. He sticks to it still, though now out of sheer bull-headedness, as the directors would give him almost anything else in the bank he wants except President Illescu's job.

"The very young men in the bank, who are horribly jealous of his advancement, call him Old Bad; they say he hasn't been in a good humor since he was born." Mr. Badeneau's cheek muscles rose at this report. "They say he always has a man steno-

rapher and a man secretary, and that he wears a plain gold ring to warn off 'flirtatious fool women,' as he is said to call them." The patient looked sourly at the ring on his brown finger. He tried to pull it off; it was tight, and so he let it alone.

Thinking she had heard a movement indicating a return of the consultants, Mrs. McWhortle began stirring about the room. Mr. Badeneau snatched the ear-pieces off his head and flung his body from side to side. The nurse rushed to him. "Is anything the matter, Mr. Badeneau? I'll call Dr. Peebles." She made a movement toward the living-room door.

"Stop! If you do I'll kill you. There's nothin' the matter but you, Mrs. McWhortle. I asked you to please be quiet, an' you are for a few minutes, but then you must go prancin' an' prissin' around the room again. You're a splendid nurse an' everybody knows it. So sit down, for the love of God, an' read your book."

She stood looking at him steadily for a full minute. Then she made a contemptuous hissing noise with her mouth, drew a deep sigh, and hurled herself with a great swishing of starched skirts at the chair and the book.

Leaning over, Mr. Badeneau slid another gray cylinder on the ancient soundless phonograph machine. Back to the doctors, he listened to a good deal of technical talk that he did not entirely understand.

Then followed various recommendations. Travel (he loathed it); golf (it was silly); continued complete abstention from meat, alcohol, coffee, and cigars for a good while longer (he'd see 'em roastin' in heckelburnie first); extreme moderation as to these even after the ban was lifted (yes, yes); a stomach belt (he would wear no corset); complete overhauling by a dentist (oh, certainly *that!*); nitrate of silver stomach baths for a month or so yet (he would never, so help him, swallow another piece of garden-hose); the breaking up of old habits of hard work sitting down; the giving up of horse-racing, his only recreation, because it was too exciting; the going out into society more; the meeting with nice pleasant people; the cultivation of a placid temperament—

Mr. Badeneau slowly lifted off the ear-pieces, lay back against the pillow, and laughed as he was certain a hyena laughs. Mrs. McWhortle shifted her position starchily in her chair, tore a corner off a page of the book in turning it, and kept her eyes away from the patient.

Cutting back to the consultation, he caught the end of a panegyric by Dr. Peebles on Mrs. McWhortle. "I took pains to select her for the case. She is more than middle-aged, calm, poised; and very wise and sympathetic and watchful. She is a non-irritant and sedative if ever there was one. I thought of giving

him a dashing young beauty for purposes of stimulation, but I'm glad I hesitated about that. Mrs. McWhortle is a second thought and an inspiration." Mr. Badeneau waved his hand at the grim inspiration, but clung to the consultation.

After a while Dr. Peebles called on the physician supposed to be the expert of experts on nervous breakdowns—masculine nervous breakdowns, he would not touch women. "Dr. Addis, what do you think? You've been letting us amateurs do all the talking."

"Well, I know one thing," said that ruddy-faced little man, who looked as healthy as a butcher; Mr. Badeneau remembered his appearance. "Your patient, Dr. Peebles, simply isn't going to tolerate your harness about his stomach and all those other things that might be good for him. He isn't that kind. He might do them for a month if you threw the fear of God into him, but some day soon he'd chuck the whole lot overboard. I don't know; let's think about it overnight. I'll phone you in the morning. If your tempestuous young Mr. Badeneau could be shanghaied, taken into the woods, and compelled to live simply and do some hard physical work every day, he'd be as fit as a fiddle in a year. But if something isn't done, and done soon, he'll go to pot."

Whereupon Mr. Badeneau removed the earpieces and sat staring straight in front of him. Those

last two sentences, one spoken almost in jest and the other in deadly earnest, were suddenly working like seed in a fertile field. Now he was indeed glad he had arranged to listen in on the consultation; he had been feeling rather shabby about that, but he was mortally tired of being treated as a baby, and he wanted to have the iron truth.

Presently the consultants filed back into the room, assuming as they came the most cheery expressions, while Mrs. McWhortle stood by the bed intensely alert.

"Well, Mr. Badeneau," said Dr. Peebles, rubbing his hands together, "a better time is coming for you. The jury can't find that the case against you is at all serious. A little patience and obedience on your part and you'll be declared innocent. I'll have the full indictment ready to-morrow. Good, I see you have been entertaining yourself with the phonograph; but you should get yourself one of the new and improved machines; yours looks rather antiquated. In the meantime, Mrs. McWhortle, light diet as usual and the white powder."

Mr. Badeneau was courteous in an abstracted way to all this undoubted medical eminence; besides, Peebles was a real friend and stood on the right side of the board at the bank. When the doctors were gone he relapsed into a model patient. He ate Mrs. McWhortle's celebrated light diet, prepared in the

kitchen from which he had driven a month before the latest of a long line of unsatisfactory want-ad cooks, upon whom he had laid all the burden of his ailments, though he had long before that virtually given up restaurants as places of suspicion. During the afternoon he was so quiet that Mrs. McWhortle slipped off to sleep in her chair.

A year in the woods! Fit as a fiddle! Simple living and some hard physical labor. All right, that was sane, easy, and pleasant. Why hadn't they said so at first, and told him the penalty for not doing it? And they wouldn't say it in their report, either, he'd bet. They'd go pussyfootin' about the case with veiled words. Yes, he was glad he had listened in.

He lay back day-dreaming of a clearing in a pine forest by the side of a bayou in lower Mississippi. There he had often camped when he was a boy, hunting in the winter and fishing in the summer. He had never had enough of it; something—school or other parental solicitudes—had always cut short his vacations. He had once wanted to build a log cabin there, take in old Frog-Eye Campbell as a partner, and wrest a living from the woods and the water. Old Frog-Eye was dead now, as were his parents; but the bayou and the forest were still there. He'd do it now for a year, with a negro boy to manage the cooking, or know the reason why. Once it was forbidden; now it was prescribed. And having been

away from his devilish department for a year he could gracefully quit it for a pleasant berth in the bank.

But everything should be done quietly and quickly. He hated the answering of questions. Besides, he might not be able to stick it out for more than a month; then there would be apologetic explanations. He loathed apologetic explanations.

The next morning he listened to his physician's report and final recommendations based on the consultation. It said nothing, however, about shanghaiing him and taking him to the woods. Mr. Badeneau declared that he had decided to travel a little, perhaps to dig in somewhere and live close to the ground, resting when he sat down and working when he stood up. He said he was leaving that night. He was going down to the bank at once to make final arrangements for his year's leave of absence, during which he would be beyond the reach of all business whatsoever. No, he didn't know exactly where he was going; just knocking around for a while with a suitcase and no destination. Yes, he felt much better now that he had decided to travel. Of course if things didn't go well he'd probably come flying back to Dr. Peebles; whereat the doctor smiled complacently, as who should say, "You'll soon be back, my man." Mr. Badeneau's secretary would look after his very few private business affairs while he was

gone; Mr. Illescu had kindly agreed to represent him in all other matters. Mr. Illescu would have his full power of attorney.

And that evening Mr. Badeneau boarded a night boat for Albany, saying he would change there for a train to the West. At his request his secretary had accompanied him to the pier for possible last-minute instructions. There were no last-minute instructions, and the secretary hurried off the pier when he had seen Mr. Badeneau on the boat. Ten minutes later Mr. Badeneau walked off the boat, and taking a cab to the Grand Central Station he checked his suitcase and rode on down to the tip end of Manhattan Island.

There he started back up Broadway on foot. This was to be a sentimental journey, of which he was, being American, masculine, and over six years old, intensely ashamed; he was telling New York good-by. He would go South on a train in the morning.

Broadway! He hadn't until to-day realized that he loved it. It felt good under his feet. He stopped to listen to a thin band back in little Battery Park, the music almost lost in the thick buzzing of the Mediterranean peoples massed on the benches and the grass of the infinitesimal park.

The night was damp and full of smells—Syrian and Italian cooking, oakum from ship-stores, hot

pop-corn, some magnificent quantity of coffee roasting near-by, a faint flavor of the sea—and he drew them all deep into his lungs. He walked on a couple of blocks.

Laying his head far back on his shoulders, he looked up through the towering walls that seemed almost to touch above Broadway, it was so narrow and they so tall. The moon was somewhere up there, veiled by slowly moving clouds, its soft light sifting down into the cool cañons. His eyes slid down the building on his right, dark and still, halting at a single window half-way down that glowed. The bright lights of Broadway! A phrase for hicks. It meant less than a mile of theatrical Broadway far up town. Here and for many other miles along the one-time old country road it was still and dim by ten at night.

He turned into Wall Street—so easy to tread because it was going downhill from Broadway—to feel the magnipotent market. Raising his eyes above the low Stock Exchange, he saw the moon itself now, a great white coin with a halo of gold around it. Trinity Churchyard with its ancient graves back on Broadway would be livelier than this soundless place; for there among the graves some brave lovers, defying fences and caretakers for the sake of privacy, would be whispering of eternal thrilling things—Mr. Badeneau noted with terror that the

tenderness in him was breaking out of bounds—while here at Wall and Nassau only an occasional gray watchman stood silent in a doorway. The market was dead until morning. The name of a stock he was deeply interested in kept running through his mind—Labitibi P & P, Labitibi, Labitibi.

To the devil with stocks and all such things. Getting back to Broadway, he entered the old Astor House, already a dingy relic, and penetrated to the colossal bar to refresh his spirits. It was an appallingly lonesome drink.

Remembering that he had been on that damnable light diet for a time that seemed a year, though it had actually been only a few weeks, he had a mind for a full meal, just one more by way of farewell, even in a restaurant. Mouquin's on Ann Street, place of pungent liquor odors, smells of good cooking, free and easy air of a masculine patronage. Here, too, only a few people; newspaper men from Park Row, a belated broker's clerk or so. Empty tables all down the long narrow restaurant running from one street to another. Cocktail, clams, half a guinea-hen, salad, Burgundy old and smooth, Camembert richly ripe, coffee, cognac, cigar—well, it was coming to him. Besides, the stirring about in the night air had added to his hunger. He had felt a weakness in his legs walking back there in Broad-

way. Peebles would object, but he believed that fellow Addis would say, "Go to it; it'll do you good." Anyway, this was a farewell supper to New York. Could a man decently eat pap for that? He ordered a second pony of cognac.

His black eyes traveled down one side of the restaurant and up the other, studying the dozen or so hearty loud young men who ate in groups of two or more. Usually he preferred to be alone. But now he wanted convivial companionship, for a while at any rate. He was celebrating something or other—oh, yes, his new independence of doctors—and celebrations need more than one.

Out in Broadway again, he went on to Park Row, then the home of virtually all the newspapers: the "Tribune" with its old-fashioned wide columns in its little red brick building; the "Times" temporarily in two buildings a block or two apart and preparing to jump up town; the "Press," already dying, set back in dark Spruce Street; in the smallest and dingiest building the most brilliant of all the papers, the "Sun"; the "World," with the elder Pulitzer still in control, even then settled in its towering red-stone home with the gilded dome; hard by the "American"; not far away the "Staats-Zeitung" and other foreign-language newspapers. Mr. Badeneau would have a paper mailed to him when he was

settled; a week's supply would come all together down there, and he would have an orgy of reading on Sundays.

Park Row was very bright and bustling; and with a zest, enjoying the struggle, the not very large and not very robust young man in blue serge shouldered his way through the crowd, most of it rushing toward the Manhattan end of Brooklyn Bridge, then the chief road home for Brooklyn people.

Beyond the bridge Park Row then degenerated as it led on toward the wicked Bowery and the sinister Chinatown; but it blazed with light, and brayed and banged and rattled with the noises of and for desperate down-and-outers who tried to conceal with clamor their evil fortunes momentarily from themselves. Pawnshops, second-hand clothing stores, restaurants with bars, saloons with eating-tables, sidewalks full of men going nowhere—nowhere that they knew of.

Mr. Badeneau looked back across City Hall Park to Broadway, again disappearing in still dimness above Chambers Street. He went on with the lights; he felt that way. Here was companionship, shabby but easy to get. He nodded at a man, who followed him into a saloon. He went on to another one, and there were three men with him, seedy, furtive men laboriously amiable. Mr. Badeneau kept saying to himself, "Celebrate to-night—good-by, New York."

Soon the seedy men were singing, but Mr. Badeneau did not sing. Somewhere in his foggy mind a point of light still shone; he smiled sardonically at the antics of his bellowing, factitiously festive friends. When one of them took command of the party and began directing into what places it should go and when it should leave them, Mr. Badeneau knew fairly well what was happening. He even addressed the new leader as General, using the word in a voice heavy with irony. Physically he was without power of resistance; his body went on from bar to bar by order of others than himself.

Sometime after midnight, eastward of Chatham Square, his body moved down a back street and into an alley between low lightless buildings. Two of his comrades held his unresisting arms back against a brick wall while the General went through his pockets slowly. The General was himself of that vague height called medium; he was also a trifle thin. Undressing Mr. Badeneau down to his socks and underclothes, he made an exchange with the victim. His comrades released Mr. Badeneau and stood away to see what would happen. His body slid down the brick wall, with a final thump on the cobblestones, and he was sitting in apparent comfort with a solid back-rest behind him. One of his comrades, noticing the gold ring on his finger, tried to pull it off. "Leave the poor guy his weddin' ring,"

said the General. "They ain't worth much. Leave him a nickel for car-fare too; he's been pretty free with his coin. Come on." They scuttled out of the alley.

Mr. Badeneau now slept for an hour or two. Then he found that he had got back some control of his body. Making his way up Park Row to Brooklyn Bridge, he climbed the steps to the platform giving on to the elevated trains going northward in Manhattan on Third Avenue and across the bridge. He had a mind to get back up to the Grand Central Station, for he was due to leave for the South shortly.

Making a mistake as to his train, he presently discovered himself crossing the East River. He saw through a window a ferry-boat moving far below. He was keenly disappointed with himself for such a yokel mistake as catching the wrong train; it seemed to hurt him more than anything else that had happened. Depression swept over him in waves. He observed sourly the gray winter suit he was wearing in August, and the shiny-brimmed derby hat, and the turned-over tan oxfords. He had been very sick, and he was very weak. Letting go of himself in disgust, he slumped over on the seat and slept.

Presently a train-guard shook him by the arm. "Where do you get off, Cap?" The train was at a station, and he walked off on to the platform. Three

or four other belated passengers were going down the stairs to the street. He went down. They disappeared into side streets. Mr. Badeneau leaned against the pillar of the elevated structure. All about him the streets were without life. Brooklyn lay in the still, dark, suspenseful pause between two days.

All along Fulton Street as far as he could see in either direction under the pale street-lights sat ash-cans from buildings with elevators and hot-water boilers. Some of them lay on their sides; all of them were obviously empty, except on his block, where the upright cans were flanked with empty boxes, barrels, piles of paper, rubbish of every description. Crowning a can within six feet of him was a woman's black hat, its bedraggled white plume sadly waving a message of defeat. Removing his derby, Mr. Badeneau bowed in the direction of the hat, but stiffly. The quantity of paper all about engaged his attention. It occurred to him that human beings use up a forest of timber a day to make paper that will last them but another day when they get it in their hands. So he thought of the destination he had planned for that morning. Grinding his teeth and groaning, he sat on the curb with his head in his hands, staring at the ragged toe of his left shoe.

Down Fulton Street on the trolley track came a long flat-car with built-up sides of board. It stopped in front of him. Three or four men began transfer-

ring to it the rubbish from the opposite curb, slamming the empty cans back on the sidewalk with a clatter that made Mr. Badeneau's flesh crawl. The fancy struck him that he was himself only a bit of worn-out rubbish. Rising, he walked over to the car, climbed up on it, and lay down at the back of it among a lot of boxes and barrels while the loaders were engaged on the other side of the street.

Presently he heard a voice say: "Put the rest of it up front. Well, this will finish it, Spike. Now we'll go to the dump; then we're through. It's easy in the summertime, but God help you in the winter."

The car moved off up Fulton Street, gathering a good head of speed within two blocks. There was little to stop it at crossings at this hour, and it rattled on steadily. The load settled down, the barrels stopped rolling about, the car rocked as a huge clumsy cradle, the wheels sang the monotonous clacking song of the rails. Mr. Badeneau was asleep.

Getting into Flatbush Avenue, the car rolled on out past Prospect Park, down through miles of houses, on into lands that were without lights or houses, slowed up to take a spur, crept cautiously to the edge of the dump, stopped. One side of its bed slammed down, the whole bed rose by creaky jerks on the other side, the load slid down the face of the dump, the scattered electric lights there snapped

out, and the car rattled back toward the heart of Brooklyn.

At the far end of the long gray line a box on fire burned a ragged red hole in the black night, and sank to ashes. Countless little red eyes glared out from the face of the dump where sparks were still alive. Faint clickings, rustlings, sighs rose from the rubbish-heap as its elements felt the chill of the morning, contracted and settled more solidly into place. The wind stirred the reeds stretching away to the south.

After a while there was a luminous powder sifting through the darkness, the eastern sky flushed slowly pink, and somewhere out to the left a bugle-call pierced the stillness. At the foot of the dump a man lay sprawling on his back, his arms extended, his head on a newspaper dyed with blackening blood that traced itself back to a wound in his head. Right side up on his chest sat a woman's black hat, rising and falling with his steady breathing, its bedraggled white plume gently waving in the wind of the morning.

## *CHAPTER VIII*

## *—Mother! O My Mother!*

When Wullie's bugle blew his stars to bed Mrs. Bullwinkle twisted her little body impatiently about on her canvas cot and went on off to sleep again; but she sank only to an upper level of dreams, for she knew that presently she must be getting up if she and Alice Kibbe were to beat the non-resident salvagers to the dump for the virgin pickings there. And not long afterward she heard something scrabbling about on her front porch.

"Yes, now Time must be coming in," she said to herself peevishly, "and I've got to raise the body."

"So you've been out carousing all night, have you?" she went on severely to the five-inch terrapin when he was inside, "and now you want to be fed of course. You're a wild and loose liver unless I'm very much mistaken, and you'll probably come to no good end. Out all night cutting up didoes!"

Yet a color of pride in Mrs. Bullwinkle's voice betrayed her; she would have liked to think of something masculine of hers that comported himself as high-spirited young society bloods were reputed to

comport themselves. She would have forgiven Time for cutting up no end of didoes if only he had cut them with an air. Indeed it did occur to Mrs. Bullwinkle now and then that Time might not be masculine, but she shoved aside the thought impatiently.

The world was but dimly lighted when she had cast a piece of dry bread to Time, bathed in a bowl, breakfasted, and dressed for the day's work, all except the final touch. Though the dump had a way of powdering its devotees all over, Mrs. Bullwinkle never went out but she must rub a whitened rag entirely over her corrugated face and neck once, and twice over her nose and cheeks and chin.

"It won't show in an hour," she explained to Alice Kibbe as often as she was surprised at her toilet, "but I feel more at ease when I've done it. It's habit, my dear, I dare say. But then it does hold me up; it's good for my spirit. My bath, my dressing, my reading, and my powder; I'd go slack down here on the dump if it weren't for them."

Wherever she found it Mrs. Bullwinkle read with a worshipful intensity all news of Society. Her salvaged copy of the New York Social Register was without its A and X-Y-Z pages, though her Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Chicago copies were complete. They were all several years old, but she kept them more or less complete and up to date in her mind. The births, deaths, and marriages of

these bright ones she could keep track of handily in the newspapers and in several weeklies and monthly magazines that came sporadically to the dump: the dilatory domiciles were much more difficult; still she managed even them.

The rest of Mrs. Bullwinkle's reading was the "Help Wanted—Female" columns of the newspapers and the "Personals" of the old "New York Herald." She answered by letter all requests for "an elderly gentlewoman" who was desired as a companion to the same. She wrote at the top of her letters "Greymoor-by-the-Sea," and though no streets had then been laid out anywhere near her far from dilatory domicile, she had once seen in a newspaper a local seer's patriotic forecast of Brooklyn's future which had extended Flatbush Avenue far down toward the coast-line, and she put under her signature some fabulous figure on that famous thoroughfare. To keep the postman coming once or twice a week to her address she wrote for sample copies of magazines and every other kind of printed matter that was offered for free distribution. Her collection of catalogues from seed houses and Fifth Avenue mail-order departments was large and varied. She also had much literature upon the raising of Belgian hares, ginseng, and silver foxes.

All her letters of application concluded with the

same postscript: "Have no objection to traveling—am a good sailor." Mrs. Bullwinkle had never sailed, but she had faith in herself, and she was resolved that if any elderly gentlewoman did require it of her she *would* sail if she died for it.

So rapid were Mrs. Bullwinkle's movements under the stimulation of competition with the non-resident salvagers that the world was still in the thin gray light of dawn when she walked rapidly up the plank to the deck of the *Old Lame Duck*. Alice was ready, and they set out to see what treasures the night had left on the rubbish-heap, Alice in cap and a long brown burlap smock affair, Mrs. Bullwinkle dingily plumed and primped. This being usually the most suspenseful and exciting moment of their working day, Alice strode along with great steps and the ancient veteran with many little ones.

"Mr. Wheatley gone to town?" Mrs. Bullwinkle asked, a trifle breathlessly.

"Oh, yes; he left thirty minutes ago."

"How does he like his position, my dear?"

"He vows that he likes it. He laughs about it a lot though. He says he is First-Gentleman-in-Waiting to the ferrets of Brooklyn's most notorious rat-catcher."

"Well, it won't hurt him. Mr. Wheatley has blood; I can see that, my dear, and nothing can hurt

blood. It rises above everything. This work on the dump has never touched me. What did you say was the name of his chief?"

"Marcus Wimpfheimer."

"It's a name I do *not* like. It sounds common."

"Yes, but Mr. Wimpfheimer is very nice. He's kind, an' he's a scholar. That's why he needs an assistant; his readin' is growin' on him so fast that he has less an' less time to waste on business. Anyway, that's what daddy says, though he makes so much fun of everything that I don't know what's the truth an' what's not. But I reckon he *is* with a rat-catcher; he wouldn't deceive me about the main thing, no matter how much he embroidered it in his talk. He says he wasn't enough of a gambler to stay on the dump; he says it made him nervous to be always thinkin' that the very next moment he might pick out a plutocrat's diamond ring an' get a perfectly stunnin' reward for its return. He gives me full permission to do the gamblin' for the family if I want to, but he says that as for him he'll bring home the bacon every Saturday night."

"Well, I *will* say, my dear, Mr. Wheatley *wasn't* good on the dump. He simply would not take it seriously. Besides, his mind was always on the *Old Lame Duck*. He was thinking of building operations all the time, and he was looking not for things to sell to Paoli Matucci when his wagon comes round

Friday afternoons but for a piece of oak or a strip of tin or a box with wide boards having no knot-holes in them. As soon as he and Wullie had got your home pretty well up, his mind was *never* on the dump. I could see that plainly. I hinted at him often out here, as you may have noticed, but he simply would *not* concentrate on the dump, and so, apart from his house-boat, he didn't do much here. The minute he laid hands on a yesterday's newspaper he'd stop everything to read the want-ads. It's a *terrible* habit. I read them too, but I firmly restrict myself to night hours when the day's work has been done."

"Yes, Mrs. Bullwinkle, but he found his job in a newspaper, an' it pays him very well; much more than he could have made here."

"Well, my dear, I don't blame him, in a way. But when he was on the dump he could get up and walk to his work; now he must ride a long distance. He *could* have made more, too, if only he had studied the dump; you can't just walk out here and gather up dollars. You've got to cultivate a feeling for the finer things; then you can pick them out instantly. I'd have been glad to instruct him, but he always turned everything I said into a joke."

"Well, Mrs. Bullwinkle, you instruct *me*. Then I'll make a lot of money, an' together he an' I will become too wealthy for anything. Maybe we'll put a

stern-wheel on the *Old Lame Duck,* as he says, an' go splashin' away to parts un—oh, *look,* Mrs. Bullwinkle!"

"*Don't* put that man's head in your lap that way, my dear. He might be just drunk. I've seen 'em that way. Besides, you'll catch a cold sitting on the ground."

"Hush, Mrs. Bullwinkle, an' run an' find somebody quick. Don't you see he's hurt? But he's alive; I feel his heart goin'. We've got to get him inside. We've got to get a doctor. We've got to bring him back to consciousness. Run, run, run, Mrs. Bullwinkle, an' find *some*body."

"There's nobody to find. Mr. Farquharson's gone up to the store; he goes early every Saturday morning. Besides, I saw him go—out of my window I saw him. And nobody else has come. But I'll bring some hot water from the house."

She seemed to be gone a cruelly long time. Alice blew the gray powder out of her patient's eyes and ears, wiped his face with her handkerchief, and tried to push her fingers as a comb through his black hair to clear it as much as she could at the moment. But it was so full of dried blood that she could do little with it. He twisted his head about in her lap and groaned, muttering "Labitibi" once or twice. "Maybe that's his name," she thought, and forthwith he was to her Mr. Labitibi.

A puff of wind sifted the powder of the dump down on them, and she moved around to shield him with her body. Now a thin stream of bright red blood ran down the right side of his head. Her handkerchief already ashy, she raised her dress, tore a piece out of her white petticoat, and held it against the wound in his hair just above his temple.

Alice Kibbe was thoroughly out of patience with Mrs. Bullwinkle when finally that little woman, peevish at being detained from profitable work at such a critical time, came stepping stiffly up with a pint of water.

"Shucks," Alice said, "shucks, Mrs. Bullwinkle, you couldn't wash a cut finger with that." And tying another strip of cloth from her petticoat around the patient's head, she got to her feet, lifted him on to an old door near-by, ordered Mrs. Bullwinkle to take hold of the lighter end while she carried the other end, and so they labored forward a hundred feet before easing the door to the ground. Thus carrying him a while and then resting, they finally got their burden aboard the *Old Lame Duck* and on Mr. Wheatley's bed in the main saloon forward.

Along about nine o'clock the patient raised himself to a sitting posture and glared first at Alice on one side of the bed and then at Mrs. Bullwinkle on the other side.

"How do you feel?" asked Mrs. Bullwinkle.

"Feel? I feel all right. Why shouldn't I?"

"You've been hurt."

"How?"

"We don't know. We found you at the foot of the dump."

"What dump?"

"Why, the ash-heap outside yonder. But you can't see it lying down. How did you get there?"

"Don't you remember how you came by that cut on your head, Mr. Labitibi?" Alice lingered on the name, watching his black eyes, which now glared steadily at her. "It isn't at all serious, though, I reckon; it's little more than a scratch through the scalp, Mr. Labitibi."

But now he was on his guard. He would say no more. He couldn't remember a single thing beyond the moment when he opened his eyes a few minutes before. He didn't know who he was, where he had come from, or where he was. He thought it possible that he was drunk or dreaming. He had a bothersome amputated sensation, and he felt his arms and legs to make sure they were there. He had the impulse to lie down and try to think it out; maybe after a few minutes his memory would come back to him, or he would wake up, or come a little more sober. Perhaps these two women—who the deuce were they, anyhow?—would say something that he wanted to know. Maybe they knew more than they

pretended. Labitibi? Was that his name. If so how did they know it?

He lay down again, turned on his left side, closed his eyes. He heard the watchers get up and tip out. His head throbbed and roared, but he wasn't going to tell these people about it; they already knew more than he did. Opening his eyes, he saw a coat and vest hanging on a queer kind of chair, a contraption of unpainted white-pine boards with a red carpet seat. Seeing that the cloth of the coat was the same as that of the trousers he wore, he got up and went through the pockets. Nothing. Nothing, either, in the pockets of his trousers.

Well, anyway, he wasn't a prisoner. All four windows of the room were open; they were covered with wire screening, but anybody could get through that. Looking out, he saw in one direction a long gray line of ashes and in the other a wide expanse of brown reeds with nothing between their distant edge and the horizon except a shining vastness. A ladder built against the inner wall of the room led up somewhere. He took a step or two upward, and then came down. He was too weak. His head seemed to swell and contract, and his tongue was dry and had a dirty, fuzzy, green-yellow taste on it. He lay down again. Maybe he could sleep, and when he woke up he might remember everything.

He noticed that he was intensely thirsty. But he

would not call those women back to ask questions and stare at him. Looking around the room and seeing a big brown earthenware pitcher filled with golden field-daisies, he got up, tipped to the table in the middle of the room, lifted out the flowers, drank all the water out of the pitcher, and put the flowers back. It was flat and sticky and bitterish water. He crept back into bed again, rather proud of himself.

"If you feel all right I'll leave you alone for a while." That tall, very white girl with the gray eyes was in the room again. He did not open his eyes, but he remembered her voice, that sounded so deeply in her throat and was edged with pulsing little high notes as liquid as a bird singing above running water.

He breathed as he thought a man sound asleep might breathe. "If you need me, knock on the floor; an' here's a pitcher of fresh water, in case you get thirsty." Her hand was on his forehead. She was away from the bed a moment, and then he felt and heard her pinning a paper to the sheet that covered him. Presently the door closed softly to, he opened his eyes. Undoing the tiny safety-pin, he read, "If you need me knock on the floor." It was signed, "Alice Kibbe." She had been so excited that she had forgotten that constructively she was the daughter

of Easley Wheatley. Alice Kibbe? So that was *her* name.

Mr. Labitibi could not make himself sleep. He was all at once excited about names. He tried to remember the names of acquaintances—everybody has some acquaintances. What was the name of the street he lived on? His business address? The place of his birth? The name of his mother? He could not reach them. He was in an agony of suspense, like a man feeling in a dark dangerous place for the end of a rope that he might climb into light and safety; he thought he could touch the tiny end of a frayed fiber, but the rope was beyond his grasp. Now, what was the name of the other woman? Had he heard it and forgotten it already? He was afraid of himself. Leaning over, he picked up a scuffed, gray-powdered tan oxford and hammered the floor with its heel. Then he sat up.

Here was Alice Kibbe. It thrilled him that he could instantly recall her name. "Yes?" she said, standing just inside the door.

"What was the name of the other one, Miss Alice Kibbe?"

"The other what?"

"Oh, the other woman. You know—the little woman with the white eyebrows, the peering bright brown eyes, an' a poker up her back?"

"Oh, you mean Mrs. Bullwinkle."

"What's her first name?"

"Felicia—Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle."

"You called me 'Mr. Labitibi' a while ago. Why?"

Then she sat down near the bed and told him how she had found him and what he had first said. Walking to the window, he looked over at the dump, a quarter of a mile away. "Where are the men who brought me here, Miss Alice Kibbe?"

"There were no men. Mrs. Bullwinkle an' I brought you here."

"Thank you, Miss Alice Kibbe."

"You're welcome, Mr. Labitibi."

"What are you goin' to do with me, Miss Alice Kibbe?"

"I don't know. My father will be home to-night. He'll decide. Hadn't you better lie down an' rest. You lost some blood—I don't know but what it was a good deal—an' besides you don't look strong. Have you been sick a good while?"

There she was asking questions again. Making no answer, he lay down. He'd have to be on his guard. He didn't believe those women could have brought him all that distance alone. He was ready to be suspicious of all statements and all people, and he knew his manners were abominable.

Just before noon, while Alice was nervously busy

trying to prepare an unusual lunch for a sick man, Mrs. Bullwinkle came swishing into the kitchen in a great hurry. She brought a hat and a theory. The hat was the bedraggled white-plumed affair that had lain on Mr. Labitibi's chest. Mrs. Bullwinkle had already assigned him to Manhattan, which she conceived of as being chiefly populated by delightful continuous sinners. She said he had probably been out the night before drinking with a woman, and that at some mad moment he had swapped hats with her, and then had somehow landed at the foot of the rubbish-heap with the hat still in his possession. She believed that if she walked suddenly in upon Mr. Labitibi with the hat on she might surprise or shock him into a confession.

"Well, what if you did, Mrs. Bullwinkle? Let the poor man alone. He isn't feelin' at all well. What would it prove if he did recognize the old hat? An' how would you know if he did recognize it? He doesn't talk much."

"Well, well, my dear, you needn't bite my head off. He might blush, or look hacked, or something. *I* could tell easily enough. Anyway, I'll try."

"You can go in by yourself, then, Mrs. Bullwinkle. I'm busy here. You're always seein' sin or mystery or both at once in everything."

For the sake of the proprieties, but barely so, Mrs. Bullwinkle tapped lightly at the door of the

main saloon and stepped quickly inside with the white-plumed black hat on her head. Mr. Labitibi was sitting up in bed, his chin in his hands, staring at the wall. He looked at the intruder inquiringly, but she said nothing; she wanted his reaction to the hat uncolored by any guiding word of hers.

"Well?" he said, the muscles at the back of his jaws rising.

Mrs. Bullwinkle straightened the big black hat on her small white round head, and gave Mr. Labitibi a grin loaded with iniquitous implications. "Do you remember this hat?"

His black eyes blazed at her.

"Or the pretty lady who wore it last night?" Mrs. Bullwinkle winked her left eye, keeping it closed a wickedly long time.

He stared at her fixedly for a full minute, his dark face flushing as much as it could. "I don't know anything about you, woman, except your name, but I'll bet that a mere darned fool is a Solomon by the side of you."

Whereat Mrs. Bullwinkle reported triumphantly to Alice in the kitchen. "He didn't say much, my dear, but it was enough for *me*. He blushed to the very roots of his hair. He was hacked to beat the band. He's a gay one, my dear, and a bad one. Keep an eye on *him*." And then coming close to Alice and whispering, she said: "*And* did you notice the *wed-*

*ding* ring on his finger? But you can take it from me that the woman he was carousing with last night was *not* his wife."

"Oh, Mrs. Bullwinkle, *hush!* You're just makin' up things. We don't know anything at all about Mr. Labitibi, an' I'd not be surprised if he knew just as little himself right now."

"Well, mark my words, my dear, and mark them well; the man's a rake and a roué and a high-stepper. He has breeding, you can see that, in spite of those terrible clothes, though his socks are silk and expensive silk. Years and years of dissipation are written across that thin, dark, haughty face of his. He has broken hearts in his time, that man has, and cared not a fig for any of them a month after he had passed on to a new love."

Ending on a note of admiration and carrying the damaged and damaging hat with her, Mrs. Bullwinkle hurried away. Calling her back, Alice cautioned her not to say anything about Mr. Labitibi to any one else on the dump. "They'd only be comin' around an' askin' questions an' tryin' to look at him."

"Not a word," whispered Mrs. Bullwinkle. "*This* is our affair. Besides, *he* would resent *those* people. Except Mr. Farquharson of course; he's one of us!"

It was a worried afternoon for Alice Kibbe. The August sun moved across the *Old Lame Duck* and

shone hotly through the front windows of the main saloon. She tipped in from time to time to drop curtains over the glaring windows, or to fill the pitcher with fresh water, or just to see if Mr. Labitibi wanted anything. She did not ask him how he felt, it being obvious that he was not in any great pain, or prod him with questions of any kind. Most of the afternoon he spent staring in front of him. But Alice Kibbe was beginning to be anxious about what her partner would say and, thinking, would not say. Would he approve of her bringing Mr. Labitibi to the *Old Lame Duck?* Shouldn't she have left Mrs. Bullwinkle on guard and gone up to the store to telephone some hospital to send for him? At any rate, shouldn't she have telephoned for a doctor to come?

She sat in the kitchen on a cushioned seat by the seaward window sewing and worrying, Jeb Stuart asleep by her side. Well, she had done the things that seemed best at the moment. She could have done no more or less; if she was a natural fool there was no helping it. She sewed on mechanically, but her mind was not on her needle. Often she dropped her hands in her lap and stared out to sea, where occasionally a sail catching the sun made a bright white spot on the horizon. When the light over the creek began thickening with night she put

away her sewing things and set about cooking dinner. She would get it ready, take some in to the patient, and then go to meet her partner.

Late in the afternoon a Sheepshead trolley stopped at the dump spur, and Mr. Wheatley stepping off saw a tall, brown-smocked, bareheaded girl striding up the track waving at him, the breeze blowing her dress against her right hip and leg, her white face all rosy with the red light of the cloud-banked west.

"Well, well, Alice Kibbe, did you find a precious pearl on the rubbish-heap to-day? An' have you hurried here to tell me all about it?"

Gathering his left arm in both her hands, so that he would have plenty of room to snap his fingers as he walked, she started back much more slowly than she had come. His limp bothered him when he was tired, and the day had been hot and enervating.

"Well, Cap, we did find a *man,* we did for a fact."

"No wonder your face looked so serious, Alice Kibbe. A man is certainly *not* a pearl. Who claimed him? Mrs. Bullwinkle?"

So she told him all about Mr. Labitibi, more and more excited as she went along, concluding breathlessly, "Did I do rightly, sir?"

"The operations of the Army of the Right in this engagement seem to me to be, strategically an' tactically, just about perfect."

"But he's in your bed, sir. That was the first room I came to, an' I was in a blue funk. We can change him to the spare state-room to-night. Besides, he needs a bath, an' you'll have to show him how we manage that in one of our wash-tubs. He needs clothes to sleep in, an' you'll have to lend him one of your nightshirts. He's some taller than you, Cap, but yours will fit him well enough. Now, come on in an' have your dinner first; then you can talk to Mr. Labitibi. He's had his, all he would eat, an' that wasn't much."

Mr. Wheatley later went in alone to talk to the salvaged man. Alice Kibbe was busy getting ready the spare state-room that was furnished, the other two being still empty of everything except the sun by day and the darkness by night. Her partner had decided to sleep there, leaving the patient undisturbed where he was.

Mr. Labitibi's bed stood across the southern end of the main saloon, and he lay on his left side staring at the wall four feet away. The old soldier lifted off the chimney of the coal-oil lamp and touched a match to the wick, though there was a hint of the day's light still in the room. Mr. Labitibi not having said a word or even looked in his direc-

tion, Mr. Wheatley sat down by the table and began smoking. Maybe Mr. Labitibi was asleep; if so he would let him have his nap out. But presently he knew from the way of the man's breathing that he was not asleep. "Hello," he said between puffs of his pipe. "Hello!"

"Hello!" But Mr. Labitibi remained lying with his face toward the wall. After a while he turned on his back and began as if talking to the ceiling: "Yes, I know; you're Alice Kibbe's father, an' you've come to take stock of me. Before you ask any questions I'll give you every scrap of information that I have about myself.

"Well, I feel rotten, but I've felt worse to-day. My head hurt like the mischief for a while, an' it is still tender to the touch where it was cut, but this little wound can't be serious. My tongue is a nasty-tastin' thing, but that's not serious. I'm restless as the very dickens; my legs have a bad case of the jimmies, but that isn't serious, either, I reckon. As for who I am, where I came from, how I landed on that rubbish-heap out there, or what I'm goin' to do from now on, don't ask *me;* I know no more about it than you do—maybe not as much. Perhaps if I sleep to-night I'll wake up an' find all my past waitin' to tie on to me. I hope I'll like it if it does. Maybe you'll slip in here to-night an' crack me on the other side of the head; that might balance my

senses so that I could remember what possessions I had when I left home, includin' my name an' address. I don't care a hang now for anything that I had except my name an' address."

He sat up suddenly and looked piercingly at Mr. Wheatley. The sea-blue eyes and the black ones held each other for a full minute, and then Mr. Labitibi lay down.

Setting the bowl of his pipe against the base of the glass lamp, the old soldier walked to the side of the bed. "You're a grateful dog, at any rate. What do you want done for you? If you like, I'll call in the police to-morrow to investigate your case, an' us. If you're an amnesia victim you're properly a hospital patient, at least for a while; perhaps I'd better see about havin' you moved to the Coney Island Hospital. It isn't so very far from here, though it's a roundabout road that the ambulance would have to use.

"Decide for yourself by mornin'. I don't care for your manners, sir, an' that's a fact, as Alice Kibbe would say. I'll bring you in a nightshirt after a while, an' if you want a bath that can be arranged. Ask any questions you want to now."

Mr. Labitibi asked none, and Mr. Wheatley walked out. Reporting to his partner in the kitchen, he said nothing about his opinion of Mr. Labitibi's manners. He had a notion that she was already just

a little belligerent about her patient, and protective of him. To Alice Kibbe this man was, Mr. Wheatley suspected, even now a creation of hers; she had picked him off a rubbish-heap unconscious and worked with him until he had come back to the light. Mr. Wheatley remembered that she had often tried to mother him, though he was not helpless enough to give her a great deal of satisfaction that way; at least not yet. Her cheated motherhood was hungry. Mr. Wheatley was vaguely worried.

"No, he seems to be feelin' very well, Alice Kibbe, an' you did the right thing in not botherin' about a doctor or an ambulance, for the present. He's all right except for his memory. It's gone for the moment; it may come back in a night, in a year, in ten years, maybe never, nobody knows. His case is common enough. There's one in the papers every few weeks, an' ten times that many that don't get into the papers. We'll sleep on it; he may be entirely himself by mornin'. We'll see to-morrow what's best to be done. It'll be Sunday, so I'll be here all day. An' we can all lie late. A long sleep will do him good, perhaps give him back his past."

Mr. Wheatley's worry went to bed with him, but it had been a hard day for him and soon he was asleep. In the room across the passage from his, and next to the main saloon in which Mr. Labitibi was, Alice Kibbe lay on her bed, fully dressed, thinking

and listening. She would stay awake until midnight, anyway. They could say what they pleased, but Mr. Labitibi was a *very* sick man. He must have been that way for a good while. He had the pale leaden look of one who has lain in bed in a shaded room for some time. After twelve, if the patient seemed asleep, she would undress.

As for Mr. Labitibi, he was furious and shakily nervous. That old man's voice had cut him. That he deserved cutting made his wounded pride smart all the more. His legs were having a very orgy of the jimmies. His knees were twitching, and he felt that if he didn't get up and walk around he would yell. The lamp was out, but there was enough light in the room from the clouded moon to see his way about. There was plenty of space to walk in. The bed, table, home-made wardrobe of box-boards, and the two chairs filled only a fraction of the space. The decking under his feet was as solid as concrete, so there was no creaking as he walked round and round the big room like a caged animal.

After a while he decided that when everybody else was almost certainly asleep he would take his coat, hat, and shoes and slip away; he had tried the outside door and found it unlocked. That old man would consider his case, would he, and decide what to do about him? He would decide for himself, thank you. He would have gone, he told himself, in

the afternoon if he hadn't been afraid some of those female ragamuffins on the dump would chase after him and ask questions and try to tell him what to do; perhaps they would even have attempted to stop him and turn him over to a hospital, or to the police.

Yes, he would slip away; and the next time he got with people he wouldn't say anything about his memory. He didn't need to know his old name to make a living. A new name would be just as good. Why not Labitibi? Well, that or anything else. What did it matter? The point was to get away, to go among people who didn't know of his disability and who would accept him merely as one more man among millions working for a living. The world must have a good many people in it who had lost their pasts without knowing whether they wanted to lose them or not. It gave him a strange sense of comfort to think that there were other people afflicted as he was.

That old man didn't care for his manners, didn't he? Damn, damn, damn! Well, he'd take himself and his manners elsewhere. He hadn't asked to come into this shanty; he had been brought in. And he wasn't so sure that he hadn't met with foul play in this very place. But he had a fairly clear notion when he said this to himself that he was talking nonsense; and that notion did nothing to soothe his temper. He knew that his manners had been abominable

all day, that the old man was absolutely right about that and was obviously a fine old scout, that that tall girl with the clean gray eyes and the voice that somehow touched him was—no, no, he must get away from this place. And somehow he wanted to bang his head against the wall.

Gathering the coat and vest over his left arm, holding the shoes in his left hand, he crept to the outside door, opened it, stepped out on the deck, closed the door behind him so awkwardly that it made a noise. He ground his teeth and cursed himself. Walking down the plank to the ground, he sat on the end of it, put on the battered old oxfords, and stood up to choose his course.

He had wanted freedom. Well, here it was. The whole world was open to him. He could go in any direction he liked. It occurred to him that he would do well to go back inside, sleep if he could, apologize to the old man the next morning, and talk over with him in a friendly way what a person without a past had better do. He didn't feel any too steady on his legs or too clear in his head. He could receive suggestions, use any that he pleased, thank that girl and her father for their hospitality, and then go away if he wanted to. Evidently he wasn't a prisoner. But apologize? No, he would *not* apologize. His manners were bad, were they? Well, all right then; what can you expect from a boor? Off to the south-

west was a glow in the sky, with towers of light reaching up into sight. There would be people; he'd go toward that light. And looking back at the *Old Lame Duck,* he ran across the cleared dry ground in front of it and plunged into the rim of clicking reeds that stretched away to he knew not what distance, opening a way through them with his two hands.

The ground underfoot was solid at first and walking easy. Occasionally the keen edge of a reed caught a hand at a cutting angle and gashed it. Mosquitoes were swarming in clouds out here, where fresh water must stand in pools after a rain for a long time. Something from the violently shaken, shoulder-high reeds was burning his nostrils and giving him a choking sensation. He worked on toward the glow in the sky.

After a while the ground under his feet was soft. He heard his right shoe make a sucking noise as he pulled it out of mud that stuck, and that foot was cold and wet. Presently the other one was cold and wet.

Now he was furious with himself. He had done *everything* wrong. He shouldn't have left the shantyboat, and if he had left it he shouldn't have come out into this meadow. Any fool ought to know that here would be soft ground and mosquitoes and probably snakes. Tearing up handfuls of reeds he flung

them aside peevishly and plowed on; but he'd go on forward now that he had started. Beating at the mosquitoes that whined about his head, he struck himself until his wound began running again; he felt the warm blood streaming from under the bandage, trickling down his face, down his neck, over his shoulder. Then he stumbled and fell. He got up quickly, breathing hard.

Stooping and feeling furiously for the thing that had tripped him, he found two crossed sticks. Picking up one of them in both his hands, kneeling on the soggy ground, he pounded one heavy stick upon the other. He wanted to hammer both of them to pieces, and he kept at his frenzied work. The wall of reeds around and above him cut off the light breeze that was blowing. Sweat oozed out all over his body. His breath came in gasps. It gave him insane joy to hear the sticks battering each other to pieces through his strength. The sticks that had tripped *him!* He told himself from time to time that he was acting like a little boy in a tantrum, and then he was madder still.

Now he was conscious that the billet in his hands was striking soft ground oftener than anything hard; sometimes a blow in the mud splattered his face with its sticky substance. His head was roaring, whirling, the reed wall about him spinning round and round at a terrific speed. Attempting too

violently to balance himself he lost his balance, fell over on his side, tried once to rise, lay still. The whining mosquitoes dropped on him. His hands and face and neck stung as if they were covered with mustard-plasters. He gathered his muscles to slap at the mosquitoes, and didn't. What was the use? He drew a deep sigh, relaxed, laid his head on his arm, closed his eyes. What was the use? Though his eyes were closed he could yet see the wall of reeds racing round him. In the stillness about him he heard some one calling, "Mr. Labitibi, Mr. Labitibi!" Was that his name? He tried to shout, "Here," but the result was a hoarse whisper, so paltry and weak that he wanted to be angry with himself. He was beyond anger now or anything violent.

"Get up, Mr. Labitibi, get up! Don't you know the mosquitoes will eat you alive out here?"

There was that girl's voice again. *She* was excited now; *he* wasn't any more.

"Come, come, Mr. Labitibi, you *must* get up. Please, please!"

No strength and no spirit was left in him. He was helpless, hollow, burnt out, gone. She did have such a voice! It was good to hear it out here in this hot, stinging, wheeling, wet, whining, insane place.

"Listen, Mr. Labitibi! You simply *must* get up. Do you hear—you've *got* to get on your feet. We've got to get out of this meadow. I'm stoopin' by you

now, Mr. Labitibi, an' your arm is around my neck. Hold tight. No, no, you're not holdin' me tight. I'd go for help, but you'd be poisoned before I made it back here, an' maybe I couldn't find you again. I'd never have found you, anyway, if you hadn't been beatin' those sticks together, an' whatever you were doin' that for I don't know. I've called an' called, but nobody hears me. Hold *tight,* hold tight, Mr. Labitibi; I'm goin' to stand up. Now! We're on our feet at last. No, no, don't turn me loose; hold on, I say, we've got to make it out of this place. Hold me tight, an' we'll get out of here, that we will. That's right; now we'll go."

Over the reeds she could see the scattered lights along the dump; to the far side of that was home; it looked a heartbreaking distance to go burdened as she was and already spent as she was through seeking for him. But she started gallantly forward. It was desperately hard going with the ground soft underfoot and the thick tall reeds all in the way.

Presently she felt the runaway's arm slipping from around her neck. She seized it with her right hand and held it close while her left clasped his body. Giving more of her strength to holding him up, she could go forward only a few feet before stopping to rest. Mosquitoes were whining about their faces, and she released his hand to fight at them, and his slack arm slipped from around her

neck and hung limply at his side. She stood still a moment supporting him upright. A wave of despair swept over her, her left arm relaxed, he slid down among the reeds at her feet. And then she was on her knees by his side wringing her hands.

Bending close to him, she whispered in his ear: "Listen, Mr. Labitibi! Would you stay right here if I covered you up from the mosquitoes an' went for help? Would you do it? For God's sake, answer me. *Would* you do it? Would you stay right here an' not move an inch until I came back? Oh, what am I thinkin' about! Maybe we *couldn't* find you again out here lyin' in this meadow all alike."

Her hands pressed hard against her cheeks, she sat back on her haunches staring down at the huddled body. Then she stood up, got the direction of the *Old Lame Duck* more definitely in her mind, lay down by Mr. Labitibi, pulled him over face down on her back, got to her hands and knees, and slowly crawled on through the meadow, his arms dangling down in front of her shoulders, his feet dragging on the ground and gradually pulling him off her back. From time to time she stopped, put her hands back over her shoulders, and pulled him forward into place; and then crawled on, her legs wet from the ground and her knees bruised by the bodies of the reeds.

Now and then, discouraged by her slow progress,

she would stand up, put Mr. Labitibi's arm around her neck, beg him to hold it there, and walk forward as fast as she could. But his arm would soon relax and slip away, and then she would crawl forward on all fours again.

After a while she felt that she *must* stop for a long rest. Letting her burden slide gently to the ground, she grabbed up handfuls of reeds to make a dry bed for Mr. Labitibi and a dry seat for herself; and sitting down and drawing his head and shoulders into her lap she pulled her dress up over his face and hands to protect them from the mosquitoes.

The small quarter-moon slid from behind a cloud and covered the meadow with a dim white light. Raising her dress to look at Mr. Labitibi's face, she saw that it was covered with mud and blood. The bandage was gone from his head. Reaching down, she tore a great square out of the side of her white petticoat, put a fresh bandage around his head with a strip of it, and wiped his face with the rest of it.

"Why, Mr. Tibby, I've just about torn up a perfectly good petticoat for you this day, an' that's a fact. Shame on you, sir!"

A long bugle-call rolled out over the meadow. "There, now, Wullie is callin' *his* children together, an' it's midnight. An' you out here trapesin' around alone." She didn't notice that she had shortened her patient's name and that she was talking to him

in the voice of a mother over an errant child. He was as helpless as a baby in her hands. He was conscious but without will to do or say anything, receiving all impressions as one drifting in a dream. Alice shouted: "Wullie! Wullie!" But she knew he was too far away to hear her weakened voice, and she was too tired to stand up and exert her strength in shouting; and she told herself that even if she did she couldn't possibly reach him.

"I heard you, sir, slam that door, an' I saw you goin' away toward the meadow. But I thought you'd come back in a minute; I didn't know you were runnin' away. An', mercy me, what a time I've had findin' you. You got the start of me, you did. Shame on you, sir; you frightened me nearly to death. Get away, mosquitoes! You mean things, you! Get away!

"Now we must be makin' it on toward home again. I'll get up first; then I'll stoop an' put your arm around my neck once more, an' maybe you can hold me tight now. Hold, hold tight; I'm gettin' up. There, you did it beautifully this time. All right, Wullie, all right, we're comin' home, we're comin' home! We've been lost too, but we'll be home again long before you blow *your* children to bed."

She strained on slowly, opening the reeds and slapping away the mosquitoes with her right hand, holding the runaway firmly about the waist with

her stronger left arm. Presently she noticed that his feet, which just touched the ground, were taking steps, and she let him down so that they were firmly on the earth. "Oh, Mr. Tibby, that's fine, it is for a fact; now you're walkin' almost by yourself, an' we needn't stop to rest any more or crawl any more. You're just splendid, you are; we'll be home before you know it now. Home again, home again, jiggity jog."

And after a while they did come out of the edge of the meadow, stagger across the cleared ground, and lean against the flat nose of the *Old Lame Duck*. He was sagging down on her arm, and she was too tired and spent to get him up the steep plank to the deck. So she slumped down on the boardwalk running around the old scow, easing him down with her. She laid her back and head against the even surface of the *Old Lame Duck's* perpendicular prow, the runaway sprawling in a heap by her side with his head and shoulders in her lap. She did so want to get him again into his bed without disturbing Mr. Wheatley; she would rest a while and then try to maneuver him aboard without making any noise. It would take strength to do that. Yes, she would rest.

There was no breath in her to either scold or encourage the runaway now. The relief the *Old Lame Duck* gave her head and back was delightful, and

she loved the ancient scow for it. Her deep bosom pumped in air in great sucking gulps. She didn't have to fight mosquitoes here, away from the meadow, by the salt-water creek, where the steady wind kept them on the move. The few that bit her didn't matter.

Netted clouds of gray veiled the curved young moon. Out in the meadow the reeds clicked and sighed under the wind. The ocean roared faintly in the southern distance. The air was filled with the clean alkaline odor of damp ashes, with the rich musty brown smell of August vegetation, with the sharp saline scent of the sea.

Soon Alice could feel the body resting against hers relaxing completely. So he must have been trying ever so hard to walk, bless his heart. His breathing became easier. He curled up against her; his head moved about in her lap until it found the easiest place to lie; he moistened his lips audibly, drew a long comfortable sigh.

"Sleep, child, sleep." She whispered it, and then her lips kept moving; without realizing it she was singing in her mind "Rock-a-by, Baby"; and when presently she did realize what she was singing she covered her face with both of her hands to hide the blushes that no one could see.

She kept telling herself that now that she had rested and won back her breath she must stand up

and contrive to get the runaway into his room. If she could manage that quietly she would not call Mr. Wheatley at all. Mr. Tibby was so tired that he would sleep as she left him on his bed for the few hours left until day. She would pull off his shoes and dry his feet before she left him. It occurred to her that she was planning to be strangely secretive with Mr. Wheatley about the runaway; her mind quickly found an explanation—she didn't want to disturb her partner. Yes, yes, that was it; but she knew that that wasn't the complete explanation, and she was worried about herself. She had been afraid of men. Why wasn't she afraid of Mr. Tibby? She shook her head slowly three times as if saying "No, no, no" to some thought that was with her.

Indeed, she *must* stand up and go inside soon now; she must for a fact. But she sat on, leaning back against the old scow, her right hand waving at the unseen mosquitoes about his head and then resting on his shoulder, her left hand feeling about the woven-wire pin at her throat, her eyes staring out in front of her. She raised them to look for ragged old Wullie's golden children of the night playing hide-and-seek behind herds of gray clouds now so vast and dense that they cut off the young moon from the earth and draped it in darkness.

She found herself wishing passionately that her life had been luckier just after her mother and father

died, that she was a small doll-like girl with finicky little manners, that she hadn't left in Forty-fourth Street the blue crêpe de Chine and all those other beautiful things; and she resolved that henceforth she would take better care of her hands; and she began thinking of a marvelous fawn-colored silk dress she had seen in one of Mrs. Bullwinkle's mail-order catalogues—you could get it in fawn, or navy blue, or lilac, but she would prefer fawn.

The runaway sighed and shifted his position; and suddenly leaning over she touched her lips to his hair. And then she rose, took off his shoes, kicked off hers, carried him to his bed, and sat in her state-room waiting anxiously for the day to come.

Alice Kibbe was frightened of herself. She hoped that Mr. Tibby would awake without memories beyond yesterday. That was cruel and unfair, it was for a fact; being without memories was in itself being sick, and would she wish him to remain sick? And then her partner, she knew, wanted him to recollect himself and probably to go away. It hurt her that she and her partner were in conflict in their desires. Nothing serious had ever come between them. Was it to come now? She shook her head slowly. And even as she did it she was hoping nevertheless that Mr. Tibby would awake as he was yesterday, and not another man with relationships that might take him quickly away.

She was only vaguely aware of fatigue. Her shoulders, arms, back, and legs ached, but little of the sensation got through to her consciousness. She had meant to lie down after a few moments. Now she said to herself that she could not sleep until she knew how Mr. Tibby would be when he awoke. She *must* know that the first moment she could, and she rose and went into his room and sat in the chair by the table.

The door to the middle passage was open, and so was Mr. Wheatley's. Whenever he should find her where she was, whether in darkness or in daylight, she would say that she had heard the patient groaning and had come to see about him. Yes, but she hadn't heard him groaning, and here she was in his room. In all her excitement she realized that she was planning to be sly and furtive about this night to her partner; she felt disloyal and soiled already with the thought, and she held both her hands hard against her mouth, for now in her mind she could see his face and hear his voice that moonlight night down yonder in Ella Whipple's dreadful house. She smelled again the perfume of those tiny magnolia buds. "I'm an old man, Alice Kibbe, an' maybe in my second childhood, an' silly; but I know that you don't belong here an' that you wouldn't be here if you warn't forced in some way; so I'm goin' to take you out, Alice Kibbe, goin' to take you out this night.

. . . Ready for one more battle before the last bugle. . . ."

Lifting herself, she tipped in her stockinged feet to the open door of her partner's room. She wanted just to hear his breathing and know that he was all right, for it was dark and she could not see his face. Holding herself with her shoulder against the door-jamb, she covered her face with her hands and rocked herself back and forth. She remembered now that night in Central Park, and she talking there. "My father used to say that friends should have no secrets from each other. . . . You were my friend, my one friend in such a long time. . . . You gave up your place in the Home for me. . . . I saw you make up your mind in a second. . . . An' so I thought how I could make it up to you for all that. . . . I was only tryin' to let you know, sir, that I wasn't unthinkin' an' ungrateful. . . . An' I didn't want to have any secrets from you. . . . I'll tell you everything to-morrow, daddy; I'll tell you *everything*. I declare I will."

And so resolving silently, she stole across to her own state-room, hesitated standing a moment, and went swiftly again into Mr. Tibby's room and sat down by the table. She only wanted to see his eyes when he awoke; if they showed that he knew her he would still be Mr. Tibby and she could be at ease —at ease for one more day.

She stretched her legs out in front of her and leaned her head back against the chair. She had been hot and feverish; now she was cold. Then *he* must be cold too; rising and stooping over him in the dark, she pulled half a blanket up over him. Going to Mr. Wheatley's wardrobe she took out and slipped on his old black overcoat. It was amply wide in the shoulders, but the sleeves were a little short, and she impulsively raised the left one to her lips and kissed the edge of it. Recalling the shoes left outside, she stole out and brought them in. Then she made herself comfortable in the chair, buttoned up the overcoat and dug her hands deep into the pockets. She felt there the gloves she had given him last Christmas, and she remembered the slippers with the buckles and the black silk stockings with the white clocks that he had given her.

Except for the dim distant roar of the sea on the southward sands, the world all about her was filled with little sounds. Her partner's ship-clock ticked in its case on the table by her side. The superstructure of the *Old Lame Duck,* created of so many different things that gave in such varying degrees to swellings and contractions, creaked in a hundred places under the chill of the morning. She could hear both Mr. Tibby's and her partner's breathing, and listening hard she could just catch the ticking of Mr. Wheatley's watch in his state-room on the dresser. Outside,

the reeds sighed, and little waves tapped on the old scow's bottom. She felt little herself, and in her mind she saw a large, placid, slow-moving, sweet-faced woman, and suddenly an agonized yearning for her swept over Alice Kibbe.

"Mother! O my mother!"

Out yonder she had herself felt strong like a mother; now she was a child again. "Mother! O my mother!" Somehow more than at any other time since she had left home Alice Kibbe wanted her near. Now she was herself strangely weak and helpless, and frightened of something vaguely terrifying that was in herself. No, no, as to that not even her partner could help her, and her mother was gone, and she was alone. . . . The clock and the watch ticked; the old boat creaked; the reeds bent swishingly under the wind; and like a child Alice Kibbe cried herself to sleep there in the chair, dreaming of that woman, seeming in the vision no older than herself, upon whose soft bosom she had once long long ago sobbed away as by a miracle every worry that came to trouble her.

Wullie blew his stars to bed at dawn, and still she slept. The darkness thinned; the sky was a vast bowl of pearl with a gold disk in one edge of it and a slim white crescent in the opposite edge. The pair of wild wood-ducks down the creek quacked and flapped their wings against the water. Alice Kibbe lay back

in her chair, her head supported against a post of it, her throat as white as the young moon, her eyelashes fairy fragments of dark lace upon a field of snow.

A tall gray kitten with slumber yet in his eyes walked out of the kitchen, strolled slowly down the long passage, and stared with half-opened yellow eyes at the girl in the chair. Then he jumped up in her lap, rolled a ball of himself there, dropped off to sleep again. Mr. Wheatley stepped out of his room, stood for a moment at the door looking at her, his blue eyes full of understanding, an understanding that was infinitely sad and tender, and stole back to the sun-flooded kitchen, closed its door gently, made a fire in the stove and started breakfast. Early church bells came softened far to the south, rolling over the *Old Lame Duck,* going out to sea.

Perfectly still in her chair, the big girl opened her great gray eyes. Perfectly still in his bed, Mr. Tibby lay wide awake, his black eyes on hers. And in them she saw that to him she was still Alice Kibbe.

And pulling on her slippers she went back to the kitchen, holding Jeb hard against her cheek, and skipping as she went.

## *CHAPTER IX*

## *—"Old Lame Duck" Goes Slow*

At ten o'clock that Sunday night Mr. Wheatley climbed the ladder that led up to his pilot-house on the *Old Lame Duck,* lit the ship's lamp on a bracket on the wall, sat down at his table, the same being an inverted box with four stout legs under it, and opened his log-book. The old captain read back over the few written pages.

Most of the entries were short: giving the date of the beginning of his craft's superstructure; saying good-by to the final dollar of the sacred fund of fifty, previously reserved for the last stand and so spent on nails and other necessities for his dry-land liner; lamenting not too seriously the difficulty of salvaging uniform window-frames from the dump and the fact that the eyes of the *Old Lame Duck* were therefore curiously varied in shapes and sizes; noting the date of his employment by Mr. Marcus Wimpfheimer, with brief commentaries upon that solemn and absorbed little literary scholar, whose passion was Ovid and the Roman poets living around the Year One; noting the date of his first

meeting with Mr. William Farquharson, gentle giant with a sterling character, a beautiful madness, and a tremulous fear of the machinations of his small neighbor; commemorating from time to time the doings of Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle, by her own report scion of a pedigreed family with a mansion aforetime on Brooklyn's Pierrepont Street, relict of a once-wealthy stock-broker named Sam whose morals were a scandal to the neighborhood and consequently a pride to his widow, sometime cosmetics saleslady in a Fulton Street department-store, connoisseur of social items, defender of Blood.

The old captain took up his pen, dated the new entry, and began writing slowly:

Wind E and S all day, shifting to S to-night. Very hot. Same forecast for to-morrow, though the nights now are comparatively cool. Latitude and longitude same as for many months past, and yet the *Old Lame Duck* has moved swiftly into worrisome water. I seem to feel hidden sand-bars all about, and sunken snags to tear holes in us; and my searchlights are old and not working well. But perhaps I am mistaken in my forebodings. Age is timorous, young people say, and, bless their half-opened eyes, they may be right.

Mr. Tibby—Alice has abbreviated him for her own good reasons—sent for me this morning before

breakfast. Said he wanted to apologize. Did so handsomely. A white gentleman with a black temper. Like all us lazy or fastidious Southerners, he leaves off of words any letters that make them harsh on the tongue or too nosy, no matter what the dictionaries say.

Said he would come out to breakfast; said he was sorry about the trouble he had already caused. I stood by the dining-table later and saw him start down the passage from the main saloon. I noticed that he kept putting out his hands to this wall and that, but I thought he was only tapping them absent-mindedly as some men have a habit of doing. Soon he was weaving from side to side like a drunken man, and I started to him. But before I could reach him he fell down just inside the door of the dining-saloon. No screaming or fluttering from Alice Kibbe, who was at the stove browning toast. Her always white face went rather gray, and her eyes were scared. In a moment she was with me, and we lifted him to the cushioned seat.

"I'm ashamed," he said, his voice flat and unemphatic. "My head was spinnin' around, an' there at the door I simply couldn't see anything. I think I'll be all right in a minute."

After a little he led us to the table, and we ate. He was very hungry, for one thing; breakfast did him visible good. Then he wanted to smoke. I don't

know what kind of smoking he is used to, but my spare pipe, which I do not reckon to be strong, drove him to bed. He denied that his head was wheeling, though he said he wanted to lie down, and did almost all day. His desperate dash last night must have taken a lot out of him; though that incredible Alice Kibbe, who salvaged him a second time, is as fresh as a daisy.

As usual, by 9 A. M. Wullie down the creek in his rowboat to fish around Hog Point, Mrs. Bullwinkle off to what she calls the Heights to attend a church frequented by Brooklyn's best blood. Alice Kibbe didn't want to make the pilgrimage this time, and though I told her God would not mind the red mosquito marks that had come on her hands and face since morning, she closed her mouth firmly, stuck out her chin, and would *not* go. So I hurried up to the grocery store of Roberto Anzoni, which is open or ready to open twenty-four hours of any day, phoned the Norwegian Hospital for the names of some available doctors, called up six, and finally induced one to visit what they all seem to consider a no-man's-land.

Dr. Juvenny came, I take it, because he has few patients as yet, being young and having only recently returned from army service in the Philippines, where he was accustomed to penetrating to strange places; and another reason why he came was that

he probably suspected that no one else would make the trip and because he is—well, Dr. Juvenny. Coincidence: he was wounded in the right thigh, just as I was, and limps much more. That leg seems shorter than the other one, but he gets around handily with a rubber-shod stick to help him.

He came by trolley and stayed an hour. No, I judge the poor fellow hasn't many patients to trouble him. And perhaps won't have for a long time. He doesn't dress or act the part of a pontifical physician; and he looks very pale and drawn himself. He is not over thirty, rather stout with scanty sandy hair, and he wears an old gray felt hat and a suit of loose gray woolen stuff that Mrs. Bullwinkle might have picked daintily off the dump with her spiked broomstick.

But he was down to brass tacks in five minutes. Examined the patient thoroughly. Keenly interested. He took away samples of blood, sputum, etc.

Dr. Juvenny came back in the afternoon. Good Heavens, can we be his *only* customer, and we a dump family at that? Poor doc! Our praise of you would seriously damage a tender young reputation even if you get one started. But obviously Dr. Juvenny isn't worried, so why should I be?

He stayed two hours this afternoon; he and I swapped some war stuff, there in the sumptuous dining-saloon, with Alice Kibbe sitting on the

window-seat, very attentive to his medical talk and not inattentive even to our martial reminiscences. Wonderful, tall, white girl, I salute you, and this is one more than the thousandth time, and not, I'm sure, the last.

Well, Dr. Juvenny said that so far as he could tell now Mr. Tibby is, besides being a victim of amnesia, a plain case of nervous breakdown; and the reports on the samples when they come from the laboratory may add other things while they help explain the nervous collapse. The doc isn't afraid to change his mind, and that's a good sign; this morning he rather tended to the advice that the patient should be removed to a hospital, but this afternoon he said Mr. Tibby had better remain here until further notice—a week or so longer, anyway.

I had been wanting to ask Dr. Juvenny what his charges would be, for reasons not far to seek, but I hadn't the nerve. If I ever get to heaven, which is doubtful, and they have celestial money, one of the things I'll never do is to ask the price of anything. But Alice Kibbe asked him right out, and somehow it didn't sound at all bad from her; that girl has a way of her own. "Well," he said, smilingly twisting his mouth to the left because he has a bullet wound in his cheek, "I'm a bargain doctor this year, but beware of me next year. I'll soak you then; now

my price is one dollar per visit, payable when, as, and if bill is rendered."

The way is not clear before me, and there are no charts for the waters the *Old Lame Duck* has steamed into. My partner and I, alas, are not in a position to be very helpful to Mr. Tibby if that help should require much money, as well it may. I was thinking this morning that he could get more expert, if not more devoted, nursing in a hospital. Moreover, the authorities there, I told myself, could probably command means of publicity, in the newspapers, for instance, that might bring to his aid relatives or friends who could be of more assistance to him than we could. And then there is that gold ring, which lies so heavily upon the mind of Mrs. Bullwinkle. Perhaps, after all, he is married, and maybe he has a wife and children who are in great distress through not knowing where he is.

I enticed Dr. Juvenny to a walk down the path by Wullie's creek in order to put all this before him, away from Alice Kibbe, who, I knew, would remain within call of the patient, the pair of us limping along with our right legs. We met Wullie coming back. He offered us fish and clams to take home, saying clam-broth would be good for a sick man; but knowing that my partner would have no traffic with fish caught or clams dug on Sunday, if she

knew it, I told Wullie so. "I'll no gie 'em to the Bullwinkle, onyway," he said truculently, and pulled on up the creek. But he did; Mrs. Bullwinkle boldly asked for them.

This young doctor is a man of parts. He said that the advertisement of a disability can be a most embarrassing thing, and that the patient, recovering his memory shortly, might hate us for making a public exhibition of him; that if Mr. Tibby had relatives or friends who were seeking him, the first thing they would do, even if they lived out of town, would be to get through to the Missing Persons Bureau of the New York Police Department a full description; that he would inquire of the police, telling them to communicate with him in case such a person as Mr. Tibby was sought.

Meanwhile the patient might recover his memory at any time, Dr. Juvenny said. He thought drifting along for a while would be the best plan. "We'll think about what to do, and wait to see what will happen. If anybody has looked for him or does look for him, we shall know it through the police; you can be assured of that. What I'm worried about is his physical condition, though I think that is going to be mainly a matter of quiet and rest. He might be better off down here by the sea than closed up in a hospital; being restless he would sometimes need a good deal of space to slash around in."

So we left it. We're drifting with the current. But I'm not easy in my mind. There are sand-banks all around, and snags to tear holes in us. I hope Alice Kibbe isn't going to be hurt in any way. Everybody else and everything else shall be chucked overboard if that will help my partner.

And so we're feeling our way along cautiously; but Mr. Tibby may thank his stars that he is, by sheer luck, in the hands of Dr. Juvenny, who is, I judge, considerably more than just a good doctor. Once in his talk to me after we were back from the walk down the creek, Alice being with the patient and Dr. Juvenny and I in the dining-saloon, he referred to his mother. His voice paused, and he limped quickly to a window, pretending that he was looking at a sail in the distance.

On the southern wall of the dining-saloon Alice Kibbe has tacked up a good-sized Confederate battle-flag. She is hard pressed to find quickly decorations for the yards and yards of wall-space we have in the *Old Lame Duck;* and having picked the flag off the dump, she tacked it up down there in the dining-saloon. It was a nice spread of color, she said, and she liked the tattered old flag anyway, because her father had marched under it, and so had I. She has made up a story to account for its holes and its burnt spots, though I told her, to her indignation, that probably some professional Southerner resident

in New York had recently had it made for a parade and then had flung it into the garbage with the bloom of newness still upon it.

Dr. Juvenny kept looking at the flag, and before he left he went close to it, ran his finger around in one of the holes; and as if to explain his silence he said, after a while, without facing me, "I was under the other one in the Philippines, and I honor it; but though I have lived in the East all my life, my father was under this one, and it comes close to me." And pulling his dingy old gray hat down over his eyes, he limped hurriedly out. Yes, in Dr. Juvenny's care Mr. Tibby is in good hands. I am sure of it.

Though I joke Alice Kibbe about her dining-saloon battle-piece, and about being a professional Southerner, until she accuses me of being a renegade, nevertheless perhaps something could be said for that old flag with its bars and its fighting white stars. Slavery flourished under it; and slavery was of the devil, and many Southern people were against slavery. More would have been if they hadn't felt themselves being pushed by some who had no slaves to lose and to be virtuous about. Under it our own flannel-mouthed orators spouted oceans of nonsense and worse, and still do. It waved over political corruption and military mismanagement, as did the other flag. And yet it was the flag of some millions of Americans defending their homes against heavy

odds. For it and what it represented, a great many men and women and boys and girls were, for a time at least, entirely unselfish and unflinchingly brave in the face of dangers terrible enough to shatter all the noble instincts in them, without thinking they were of heroic stuff; and the same, no doubt, might have been said of a great many living beneath the other flag if they had been under like pressure. And it was the flag of Jackson and Davis and Lee.

For me it calls back parched-corn coffee, solid corn-pone fried in bacon-grease and sprinkled with black pepper and tasting like ambrosia. It calls back the sight of a shy solitary soldier some of our men —I among them, God help me—stripped as a jest to throw into a river wash-hole, and "he" was a thin little woman with flat breasts who cried with her face against a tree and her shoulders all hunched up, and we were ashamed and ran away. I remember the open eyes of a dead boy on his back in a shallow pool in the woods on a moonlight night; the face of an old shoemaker who gave me a pair of new boots when he saw through his shop window that my feet were making red tracks in the snow; the dim outline of my mother's straining body that night at ten o'clock when I walked home from the war.

Seeing from the main road a light in the kitchen, I slipped barefooted in the back way. No one was in the kitchen, the house was quiet, and I stole to the

door of that front room we old-time people used to call the parlor. She was sitting by a window looking down at the big gate by the main road. I could just make out her form there in the dark. She had been watching with her one good eye from that window for over a month. I slipped back outside and walked straight up from the big gate, loudly whistling.

Dear me, dear me, this is a ship's log; and a ship's log should be brief and to the point, for the voyage may be long, and much space may be needed. I have been prodigal of space to-night. But there, now, perhaps the voyage is not going to be as long as I thought. I seem to feel sand-bars all about, and snags to tear holes in us; and my search-lights are old and not working well. *Old Lame Duck,* maybe you and I will yet sidle up to a black wharf somewhere and go to pieces together.

## *CHAPTER X*

### *—Gentleman of Temper*

A BODY would think the *Old Lame Duck* were a sinful ship that rested on week-days and sailed on Sundays, for it seems that only on that date do I find time to write in this log, and not always then. Wind S, shifting to W. One month and a day since Mr. Tibby came, and this mid-September is often keen and chilly at night. But beautiful weather, beautiful weather. Forecast for to-morrow: fair and warm by day; fair and cool by night.

We have been drifting, and still are. Dr. Juvenny says there is nothing else to do. Apparently nobody is looking for Mr. Tibby; if they are, the police don't know it. The laboratory sharks reported that the samples of blood et cetera showed nothing worse than anemia. His scalp wound was no more serious than a mosquito-bite, according to Dr. Juvenny, who sees the case as one of shock and a general run-down condition, the latter requiring plenty of fresh air, of which there are ample stocks hereabout, plenty of well cooked simple food, which Alice Kibbe could manage without half trying though she puts her

whole heart in the job, plenty of sleep, which Mr. Tibby usually achieves in the day, and plenty of exercise, which he takes mostly at night, that being the time when he is most wakeful.

Dr. Juvenny argues with him steadily to use his will-power to turn his habits right about face, telling him that he has fallen into the bad habit of nocturnal wakefulness with a consequent daylight sleepiness. "Force yourself to do about in the daytime until you're dog-tired," says the doctor to him, "and then you'll sleep at night, and the next day it won't be hard to stay awake." But the doctor confesses to me, privately, that this is much more easily said than done; especially as Mr. Tibby's will cannot escape entirely the anemia of his body.

For three or four days after Dr. Juvenny's severest lecture on the subject of exercise and sleep, Mr. Tibby wandered all over creation until his legs ached, but those nights he was as sleepless as ever. "You overdid it," counseled the patient doctor. "Keep at it; you'll get turned around straight after a while." But Mr. Tibby was discouraged—he is easily discouraged—and now he often gives up, dozing around all day and prowling half the night outside somewhere.

This is hard on my partner; and though she never complains, I see its effect on her. She isn't dazed and dumb as she was down there at Ella Whipple's.

When was that? Years and years ago, it seems now. But she isn't so lively and spirited and gay as she was over yonder in Forty-fourth Street, and out here when we first came. There is a little wrinkle between her eyes sometimes, faint gray rings around them most of the time; her face is drawn, and she is too pale. She was always very white, but it was a healthy whiteness; this waxy pallor is not healthy.

But no wonder. She is not made of iron. I suspect that as each day comes she worries lest to-morrow Mr. Tibby may get back his memory and go away. And each night when she lies down, however weary she may be, she fights against slumber until he is quiet and seemingly asleep, for Mr. Tibby might try to walk out alone. Out there he might have one of his dizzy spells, she fears, or he might get lost in the meadow; a hundred things might happen to him; and so she lies listening. If he thrashes about in his bed, or gets up and begins pacing around in his state-room opposite hers—I have got back the main saloon for myself now—she is on the alert. And if he goes out she goes after him.

The first time she followed him after his desperate dash toward Coney Island was three nights later. I heard him go out of the kitchen door. I came up to the pilot-house here, making no light, with the idea of keeping a watch over him. I thought he would probably walk back and forth across the clearing

in front of the *Old Lame Duck* until he was tired. Despite my game leg, I determined to follow him myself if he struck out as if meaning to go a distance. But he hadn't been off the boat a minute when I saw Alice Kibbe hurry down the gang-plank and start after him. The night was dimly luminous, the golden fraction of a moon unclouded but weakened by a haze of moisture hanging close to the ground.

"Go back!" he hissed when he saw her following him. "Go back, I say! I'm not a baby, an' I'm not a lunatic." He was in a black tantrum, and the blazing fury in his voice must have burned her. In my mind I could see her left hand flutter to her throat. And she stood for a moment without speaking. Then she called to him:

"Please don't talk loud; it might wake up daddy. If you'll walk here by the boat I'll sit on the deck an' not say a word. Won't you do that, Mr. Tibby?"

"In God's name, am I not to be trusted out alone? Have you got to come taggin' after me when I come out at night? Let me alone. Go back to bed. I can take care of myself, thank you."

I could see her only dimly in the sifting luminous mist, but either I saw or I imagined I saw that her head dropped, and then lifted. "I *won't* go back. You're not well, an' you'll hurt yourself out here in the fog. I'll go wherever you go, Mr. Tibby; I will for a fact."

There was that in her voice which made cold chills run down my back, and I wanted to shout down at her to come on inside, and to him to go to hell or any other place he chose so long as he was quick about it. But I knew that it would hurt her to know that I had been witness to his conduct, and she was hurt enough already. Besides, he flung up his hands and let them fall; I fancied that his teeth were grinding and the muscles at the back of his jaws standing out; and he rushed up the gang-plank, ran around to the kitchen door, got back to his state-room and slammed the door. She stood still until he was inside, then she slowly came aboard and went to her room.

Moreover, I knew by then that the next day he would be repentant, his eyes full of eager appeal to her, and that he would try in a dozen ways to make up for his offense. And that was so. At the breakfast-table, though he had paced his room like a tiger the rest of the night, he was humble and quiet and quickly responsive to every wish of hers or mine, stated or implied. He stood behind her chair to push it under her when she sat down. He volunteered to walk up to Anzoni's for the milk and walk back—a good two miles. He suggested casually that he was going out on the dump again with Wullie and try once more to pick up something that would sell. Late that afternoon, he said, he was going to take Wullie's

boat for an hour's rowing on the creek, and could Alice Kibbe come with him? He would get her back in ample time for dinner, and help her cook it. He hastened to pledge himself to do all manner of things that Dr. Juvenny had advised him to do, including even a set of morning exercises which he had laid aside after one trial, saying that he felt like a circus foot-juggler, lying there on his back kicking his legs around.

I had made up my mind to take him outside after breakfast and give him a laying out: he was to mend his manners to Alice Kibbe or pass on. But that was impossible now, and I knew it would be; he had already, I suspected, laid himself out in harsher tones and terms than I could use. Dr. Juvenny says his nerves are raw, literally and figuratively, and that this, together with a naturally high temper, perhaps too little controlled in the past, make him a problem in patience. Well, as to him or any one else she cares for or feels sorry for, my tall partner has the patience of an angel, and lest I hurt her I must pretend that I have it too.

And except when he wounds Alice Kibbe I like him well. One night recently while I was up here supposedly reading, though I was just enjoying a high and mighty seat in the pilot-house once more and mooning out of the window, he climbed the ladder, knocked on the floor when he had reached the

last rung, and waited to be invited up. Dropping into my other chair over there, he said: "Look here, sir, I can't go on spongin' on you all like this. I've tried to do what the others do out there on the dump, but it doesn't seem to be in me to manage it. Every five minutes I catch myself sittin' still and starin' before me. I know what I'm doin' then: I'm tryin' to remember things, an' I can't remember *anything*—anything about myself, I mean, beyond the day I woke up here. I'm only rammin' my head against a stone wall when I try to remember, an' it dazes me. Isn't there some part of your work you could put me at, sir, an' make me do it? I'd like to earn my salt, at least; I'm not doin' that now. An' what I'm goin' to do about payin' Dr. Juvenny I don't know."

Well, I told him the doctor and I had thrashed out the question of medical fees, as indeed we had; that Dr. Juvenny was interested in the case, wanted to study it, had worlds and worlds of time to do so, and would present his bill when and if any of us came into a small fortune. Meanwhile the doctor wasn't losing any practice on account of him, and dropped in only when it pleased him to do it, and that was usually when he was passing on another call. All of which Dr. Juvenny had actually said, and though I doubted some of it, I passed it on. That portly limping doctor with the wistful face comes here for two reasons: duty to a patient for

one thing, and the other isn't my affair, at least not an affair to gabble about in a log-book.

As for helping me, my job was a joke, I told Mr. Tibby, so that I was hard put often to appear decently busy. And that is true. I sit in a front office up on Brooklyn's Third Avenue, answering telephone calls, meeting people who come in, making out bills now and then, pompously rattling papers at a desk, and serving as a screen behind which Mr. Wimpfheimer pursues his studies of the Latin poets around the Year One in the back office with the glazed door. The only real work achieved in our establishment is done by the ferrets and the fumigating-machines and the men who handle them.

The innumerable hours Mr. Wimpfheimer puts in with his books, periodicals, and finely pointed fountain-pen he doesn't count as work. In addition to his studies, he writes thunderous letters to the mayor, borough presidents, and all manner of municipal officials about alleged abuses of which he knows nothing except what he reads in the newspapers; and then he writes to the newspapers about the officials. In his letters Mr. Wimpfheimer sounds like an iron-hearted hellion, but he talks and looks like and is one of the softest and gentlest of men. His voice is fine and feminine, his large round face is thickly padded with fat of the color and consistency of dough, and his manner outside his letters

is shy and fearful. There isn't a wrinkle in his huge pale face. With his big horn spectacles he is a great white owl. And his feet are so small that he is horribly ashamed of them.

All of which and even more I told to Mr. Tibby, meaning to take his mind off himself. He looked me in the eye as if he were listening with the most courteous deep attention, but I knew very well he wasn't. And when I had done with Mr. Wimpfheimer, scholar, patriot, fumigator, and exterminator, Mr. Tibby said: "Yes, sir, but has Dr. Juvenny told you anything about me that I don't know an' that you can tell me without breakin' a confidence? He warns me against tryin' myself out on a job in Brooklyn or Manhattan, sayin' that I might have one of my dizzy spells an' go momentarily blind in the middle of a street an' be run over. So far as I can make out, sir, he is tellin' me to keep on hangin' around an' spongin' on you all."

"Well, do you dislike our company, Mr. Tibby?"

"No, sir, but I dislike bein' a bum any longer than I have to. I'm doin' some bookkeepin', an' I find that all the credits are on your side an' all the debits on mine. The little money I have picked up you an' Alice Kibbe have made me spend on myself or keep. I don't like myself at all in my present rôle."

"Dr. Juvenny says you're slowly but steadily improvin' here, Mr. Tibby, and he wants you to do

just that—stick around; only you must eat a lot, exercise a lot in the daytime, and sleep a lot in the night. Go on with your bookkeeping, if you like, and pay us all back out of your first ten thousand dollars. And at any time, you know, your past may come back to you. Better be disengaged and in good shape to meet it. It may surprise you."

"Yes, sir, but I've waited some time already for that lightnin' to strike me. I might as well get started without my past. It's probably left me for good; anyway, I can't wait for *it*. An' I don't think that now I'd go blooey an' blind if I took on a job."

"What would you do, Mr. Tibby?"

"I'd be willin' to try absolutely anything."

But I won his promise to drift along for a while longer. And that is the status at this date of our man without a past.

Still he often goes out at night to drug himself to sleep with fatigue, and still Alice goes with him. She tells me about their trips the next day. He argues with her to stay at home, but she goes nevertheless, and he submits more and more graciously each time. All over the earth they go, a pair of silent prowlers urging themselves on as if it were tremendously important that they arrive at some definite place by a certain and early time. When the ground is soft underfoot they follow the trolley track far up into Brooklyn, though they like that route least

of all. When it is dry weather, as it has been mostly so far, though some floods of rain are due now soon, they follow the path along Wullie's creek almost down to the sea. If the moon is bright and unclouded they often take Wullie's boat for two hours of hard rowing for Mr. Tibby.

One dark night last week I shall not soon forget. Hearing the sound of an ax on wood about 2 A.M., I climbed to the pilot-house here to look out. Our woodpile is on a little knoll by the creek, where we collect driftwood from its waters and solid pieces from the dump. So far we have had to have wood only for the kitchen stove, but soon we shall need a great deal for the heating-stove in the main saloon, which is our living-room; and we have got together a sizable pile of stuff out there. Well, I looked out, and there sat Alice Kibbe, capped and cloaked, halfway up on the tall woodpile, holding steadily with both her hands my lantern with the bull's-eye in its chimney. Its yellow light spread downward making a circle of illumination for Mr. Tibby, coatless and with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, who was cutting wood with his usual passionate intensity. I climbed downstairs, went to bed, and drifted off to sleep to the rhythmic thuds of the ax on wood.

All my life the sound of wood-chopping at night has had some strange fascination for me. I don't know why, but I like to hear it, especially when win-

ter is in the air. It is because it is a promise, I reckon, of cozy comfort to come when the nights are full of frost.

I congratulated him the next morning on the new idea, which he said was Alice Kibbe's, as usual; and he pledged himself enthusiastically to cover every free space on the deck with wood before another month has gone. And he has done a great deal in that direction already. Indeed he has this week taken full charge of the problem of our winter's supply of wood, busying himself about collecting it as well as about cutting and storing it. He says that chopping wood is better exercise for his body muscles than kicking up his legs on the floor of a morning.

Mrs. Bullwinkle of course is delightedly excited about Alice Kibbe's nocturnal companionship with Mr. Tibby, who is, she insists, a man with a past it will be lucky if he can permanently forget. She throws hints at Alice Kibbe, who ignores them; at Mr. Tibby, who always glares silently at her whatever she says; and at Wullie, who doesn't understand her innuendoes and says, as he habitually does on the subject of our guest, that he is a star lost behind a cloud, but he will come out again. At me most of all does Mrs. Bullwinkle hint about the dangers hovering about my partner. I tell her not to worry, and then change the subject.

Dangers hovering about my white-faced partner?

I do see dangers, and they haunt me; though they are not what Mrs. Bullwinkle thinks. But there, now, perhaps I am as silly and fanciful as she is. Anyway, danger is always hanging around whether we see it or not. Get used to danger if you can, and forget it. If you can—that's the point.

This September night has a cutting edge on it, and though my overcoat is buttoned all down the front and turned up around my ears I still feel the touch of winter in the air that streams in through my open window here. I shouldn't mind having on Dr. Petrie's famous red overcoat at this very minute.

I wonder how it is down at the Home now. Warm yet, I reckon; and to-night some of them are probably sitting outside under the pines. Old Paul Lamarque is playing his accordion, maybe, while Jim Ochiltree and Hasty Hammond and a dozen others are howling about Bonnie lying over the ocean. It will be a sad loss to soulful singing if Bonnie is ever actually brought over from the other side of the sea. You stay where you are, Bonnie, and let impromptu singers have a good time. And of course Jean Carpeaux and Anson Dorgan are inside playing chess. If they are still alive! I haven't heard from down there since I left. It seems twenty years or more now.

But, God bless my soul, what have I to do with

the Home? Nothing. All that is over with, and yet here I sit making pictures of it for the first time since that night at Ella Whipple's house. Am I a little lonesome these days and nights? Good Heavens, no; I don't have Alice Kibbe with me as much as before, but she is about and I hear her, and this old boat is full of her. Am I afraid of something then? No, no, it must be only the feel of winter in the air; that is always a chilly reminder to me that Time is moving on and moving me on with it.

Dear me, dear me, I haven't put in the latitude and longitude yet. We fresh-water skippers didn't need to worry about that, but this *Old Lame Duck* is a salt-water craft, and it is proper to write down the latitude and longitude in this log. Please God, our latitude and longitude, anyway, remain the same.

## *CHAPTER XI*

## *—And So He Fares Forth*

THIS is the last Monday in October, and the early morning is cold and clear. The stove in the main saloon of the *Old Lame Duck* will not be warm until Mr. Wheatley comes home. But the large kitchen stove is roaring along, crooked lines of red showing on its fire-box. Paoli Matucci swapped it for a day's pickings on the dump, and it is well beloved of Alice Kibbe not only because of its easy draft and marvelous oven but because it was such a whale of a bargain.

It is eight o'clock. Mr. Wheatley has been gone some time. Alice Kibbe is at the small table by the round north window washing dishes, which Mr. Tibby dries absent-mindedly. He keeps looking at her when he thinks she isn't aware of his side-wise scrutiny; but it isn't according to nature that a Mr. Tibby shall look at an Alice Kibbe, however furtively, and she not know it, and presently she says quietly, not raising her eyes from the bubble-covered water in front of her, "What is it?"

"Nothing." He bends his head, flushes, and gives himself intensely to the drying of dishes.

Since Mr. Tibby came, Alice Kibbe has almost deserted her gambling on the dump. There seems so much more to do around the *Old Lame Duck*. The midday meal is now a matter to worry about as well as dinner; she took her cooking seriously enough before Mr. Tibby dropped down from nowhere, but since then she has dedicated herself to his physical upbuilding so far as food within reach of her purse and cuisine can do it.

Besides, there is one more room to look after; and she uses infinite patience and ingenuity in persuading him, without irritation, to do all manner of things for his own good. Without constant watchfulness on her part he will lapse into daylight sleeping or hours of staring at a wall. She contrives that he shall cut wood and bring it in, go to the grocery store a mile away, row down the creek and try to catch fish, do repair work on the *Old Lame Duck*, etc., etc. Usually he thinks he is doing these things of his own initiative.

The dishes done and Mr. Tibby gone to his room, Alice Kibbe sits on the cushioned seat by the window sewing, but she is thinking how to guide him to an apparently voluntary pilgrimage to Roberto Anzoni's store. Rising quickly, she washes two milk-bottles and sets them in the middle of the

dining-table. When he comes back from his room he will notice them in that unusual place and ask if she needs milk, whereupon she will name several things she ought to have if he really wants to go to the store. She will offer him car-fare, but he will as usual refuse it. That will mean two healthy miles of walking in the keen sunlit air.

But when he comes back he takes no notice of the bottles. Dragging Mr. Wheatley's shoe-shining outfit from under the dish-washing table, he gives his battered tan oxfords their first polish since they have been in his possession, and a most amateur polish it is too. Then he stands at the east window, his hands clasped behind him, looking piercingly out across the flat land. There is never, she knows, anything out there worth dwelling on with the eyes, except the pink sun flaming at dawn. She notes that he is wearing one of the two new shirts he bought with the small money he has earned on the dump, and he has shaved himself thoroughly with Mr. Wheatley's razor. His hair, which Wullie had recently cut with sheep-shears on the pattern of a bowl held firmly down on his head, is meticulously brushed and combed. She bends over her sewing, and every now and then her left hand goes fluttering up to her throat. Jeb Stuart strolls in to rub himself ingratiatingly against the hem of her dress, but she pays no attention to his deliberate appeals for attention.

After a while Mr. Tibby drifts over to the north window and gazes through that. Then he jams wood into the stove, though the fire-box is already full enough. Going to the door of the passage, slowly, he leans his shoulder against the corner, begins scratching with his finger-nail on the wall, and speaks something down the passage that Alice cannot understand. She sews on.

He repeats it in a louder voice. "I say I think I'll go away to-day—I've got to make a start sometime." Now she understands.

Her hands drop dead in her lap, and from under her bent lashes she studies his back and the side of his face visible to her, as if trying to read some hard riddle there. She hears his nail scratching on the wall of the passage. Jeb purrs industriously at her feet, the fire in the stove pops and crackles, the sea far behind her thunders on the sand.

"But you'll be home in time for dinner, won't you, Mr. Tibby?"

"I wish you'd tell them all good-by for me, Alice Kibbe. An' don't think I'm tryin' to be familiar when I call you that, leavin' off the 'Miss'; I've heard Mr. Wheatley say your name that way so much that I think it so an' then I say it so. I meant to tell Mr. Wheatley good-by last night, but somehow I couldn't. Besides, he'd have argued against my goin'. Him an' Wullie an' Dr. Juvenny an' even Mrs. Bullwinkle,

reckon; tell them I decided in a hurry to go, though I've not decided in a hurry."

He is still talking down into the passage, but even if he were whispering now she would understand every word he says. She sits bent forward, her great gray eyes fixed on the visible side of his face, her hands pulling to pieces a tiny scrap of cloth in her lap.

"I believe I'm all right now, Alice Kibbe; at least as to physical health. I'll make a livin' somehow; I'll wash dishes, or work on the street, do anything that's necessary. I know you think I'm bein' too hasty as usual; that if I'm goin' out into the world I ought to study the want-ads in order to find something before I make the dash. But I'm afraid to wait; I'm afraid that when a chance came, if one did come that way, I might be so blue an' contrary an' spiritless I'd let it pass. But now my mind is made up—it's been hard to make it up so, Alice Kibbe—an' I'd better go while I'm able. With all supports taken away an' thrown on my own responsibility, I believe I can make out; the discipline of hard work will be good for me.

"I'm ashamed of myself, Alice Kibbe, that I've let myself stay here so long. I'm a bum. I'm ashamed that I didn't try earlier to do something here to help pay my way; not because you all wanted me to, Alice Kibbe, but because *I* should have wanted to

strong enough to really do it. I'm ashamed that at first I was offensive in my manners to Mr. Wheatley. An' I'm ashamed for all the times, in my inexcusable tantrums, I hurt you. I knew all the time that whatever you did about me was meant for my benefit. But all that is past now. A thousand times I've hurt you, Alice Kibbe, an' a thousand times you've forgiven me. I saw it in your eyes.

"Will you tell Mr. Wheatley an' Dr. Juvenny an' Wullie that though I've had no grace to show my gratitude I *am* grateful to them. An' as for you, Alice Kibbe, I——"

"Don't, Mr. Tibby; don't *thank* me!"

"I don't know where I came from, or where I belong, or where I'll go. I'll try Brooklyn an' Manhattan first; if I don't find something permanent an' satisfactory there, I'll go on to other places. Maybe I'll have a better chance in a small town or on a farm. Dr. Juvenny says, you know, that I'd better keep off crowded streets for a good while. I haven't felt dizzy in some time now, but perhaps a town or a farm will be better for other reasons also. I don't know. That will have to work itself out."

"Will you write to us, Mr. Tibby?"

"No; not for a long time, anyway. I've thought it all out, an' my plans are laid, an' I've worked up my courage at last to make a start. If I began writin' an' gettin' letters, the first time I had a hard pull I'd

come crawlin' back here. I know that's the way it would be. I'm afraid of myself, Alice Kibbe; that's the truth. I'm shot to pieces inside somehow; I'm soft. I'm no good, an' I'm afraid."

And then he stands with one hand trying to slide the tight ring around on his finger, and she sits back against the window-seat and turns away from him and traces with her eyes the creek twisting and doubling and yet going on down to the sea. The kettle on the stove sings quietly to itself. The gray-striped kitten rouses himself from a nap in a sun-spot, humps himself enormously, and exposes a pink curled tongue in a great yawn. And when she looks again Mr. Tibby has gone down the passage. Her face is in her hands now, and the faded blue cotton dress alternately strains across her bent shoulders and then puckers into deep wrinkles.

But she hears him blundering noisily about in his state-room, and after a while she shakes her head violently, picks up the torn shreds of cloth tangled with thread in her lap, rushes to the passage, and calls, "I'll fix you a lunch, Mr. Tibby, to take with you."

When he comes to get it, he pokes out his hand, looking away, and says, "Well, good-by, Alice Kibbe; I'm sorry I didn't get as much wood cut as I promised."

And gazing hungrily into his averted face she

says, "Good-by, Mr. Tibby; write to us when you can, an' think of us often. Take care of yourself, Mr. Tibby."

And so, with lunch-box and a roll of clothes, like a boy going forth to brave the world, he sets out for the trolley track. From the pilot-house Alice Kibbe sees him reach the spur, follow that on around to the main track, and then sit down to wait for a car. It comes, it stops, he is gone. And Alice Kibbe lies face down on her partner's table.

The sun moves across the *Old Lame Duck* from east to west, the night sifts down like a gray powder until all the world is dim and then dark, and Wullie calls his children of the sky together. Mr. Wheatley finds the house in order, dinner ready; and though his partner is waxy white and very still, she tells him at once and calmly of the day's happenings and of the messages of apology and gratitude that Mr. Tibby left with her.

"Well, we did our best, Alice Kibbe. I knew he'd try to go sometime soon. He says he hasn't any spirit; he has a plenty, too much for his own good just now."

"Do you think he'll write, sir?"

"In spite of what he said? I don't know. He probably will when he has *good* news to tell. Let's hope he has good news soon, Alice Kibbe."

Early in the night the October wind swings around

to the west, the air chills rapidly, and it seems very cozy in the main saloon with the stove going strong. Jeb Stuart lies near it purring, Mr. Wheatley sits by the table under the shaded yellow light of the coal-oil lamp reading, and Alice Kibbe is on the other side sewing or tatting or doing some of those other things that women's hands are interminably at. So her partner phrases it as he watches her from time to time.

Presently Mr. Wheatley takes off his reading spectacles, holds them up to the lamp, and moves them about to see if the lenses are smudged or not. "Mr. Tibby was a lot of trouble, but it's lonesome without him, isn't it, Alice Kibbe? I do wish he hadn't gone so soon. Next year would have been time enough. At the rate he was improvin' he could have been entirely on his feet by next summer. Dr. Juvenny was very well pleased with his progress during the last month. He says Mr. Tibby can lose in one day the gain of thirty at this stage of his convalescence, if he is unlucky. Well, we couldn't hold him a prisoner, could we, Alice Kibbe? He is free, white, an' twenty-one; an' besides I expect he'll make out all right. It *is* lonesome, though, now that he was here an' is gone."

She makes no comment, and he slides the spectacles over his ears and begins reading again, looking at Alice Kibbe out of the corners of his eyes

every now and then. Her lips are pressed hard together, and her fingers are swiftly at work. More and more frequently her left hand flutters up to her throat, but she pulls it down with a visible effort of her will. And presently her partner gets up and hurries to the door, saying he has almost forgotten that he promised Wullie to come over and see him this night.

"Poor old Wullie has lost that little green star of his which he calls Ida, an' he's terribly worried about it. He's lost her many a time before at this season of the year, but his memory is weak, and he's especially fond of his little Ida. I keep tryin' to explain to him that some of his stars are always droppin' down behind the world an' can't be seen for a while, though they are bound to come back; but he's hard to console. Well, if you don't mind, I'll go over an' try again to make it clear to Wullie that his Ida is skylarkin' around with an invisible cloak in the daytime now, though she'll be her own proper little self again before so very long."

When he is gone she tips into Mr. Tibby's room with the lamp, sets it on his table, turns back the bedclothes, and stands looking around. Stepping close to the mirror hung above the home-made chest of drawers, she stares at her face, so drawn it seems all gray eyes. Then she slowly shakes her head back and forth. Beginning with the top drawer, she pulls

them all out and peers into them again. All empty, except that in a back corner of the lowest one is a ten-cent sock bought with his dump money.

She sits on the bed smoothing out the crumpled brown sock on her knee. Turning it over, she sees a small hole in its heel, and then she is suddenly broken and gives up and lets herself go, sitting there on the bed with the brown sock held against her left cheek.

By ten o'clock the *Old Lame Duck* is quiet to-night. Mr. Wheatley has returned and has closed his door leading into the passage, for he sleeps with his windows wide open, and the heat in the kitchen must be saved as much as possible for to-morrow. Mr. Tibby is on his mind; but the old captain is a philosopher as well as a very tired man, and soon he is plunging along far out to sea on an old black scow with a stern-wheel and a green search-light.

For Alice Kibbe, lying on her back in bed with her hands folded across her breast as if she were dead, and staring up into the darkness, there is no worry to-night lest in the morning Mr. Tibby awake with another name. No strained listening to hear if he is thrashing about in his bed preparatory to a five-mile prowl out across the flat lands and she with him urging him on. But these worries, seeming now so distant and so small, are swallowed up in one great worry as to where he is. Hers is a picturing

imagination, and she tries to see him safely in a comfortable bed somewhere and asleep; she has watched him asleep many times, and his face still and easy in slumber is familiar to her. But she can't see him so to-night. The picture that she cannot drive away is of him in the midst of a tangle of traffic, such as she has seen at Broadway and Thirty-fourth Street, dazed, blinded, groping, falling under a truck.

It is a night for sleep, though sleep is far from Alice Kibbe. The wind cuts sharply around the *Old Lame Duck,* and the cover lies warm and cozy on her body. But she does not notice that her body is comfortable.

At eleven o'clock, telling herself that she *must* see if Jeb Stuart wants to come in, she opens her door, tips to the kitchen, holds the outside door ajar, and looks into the black night before her and then up at the sky, where heavy clouds drive swiftly over the moon and stars. She feels no soft fur rubbing against her bare ankles, and sighing she closes the door and stands for a moment staring around in the darkness. The huge kitchen stove is a dim monster with dull red marks on it, and it almost frightens her.

After that she sleeps a while, but at midnight Wullie's bugle-call wakes her. The wind catching the notes of it whirls them, from time to time, quickly beyond hearing, as if they had dropped into a deep

hole; and then suddenly, as the wind falls for a moment, the bugle comes very close and sounds very loud. Though Jeb is an all-night prowler, she tells herself that nevertheless it is very cold, and she ought to see if he won't come in now.

Stealing again to the kitchen and opening the outer door a few inches, she stoops down and peers out. Something is in the darkness close to the door.

"Come in, you naughty boy, you!"

"It's me, Alice Kibbe."

And rising up and closing the door, she takes him in her arms, and stands rocking him back and forth as if he were a baby, his bowed head held tight against her breast.

"I told you I was no good, Alice Kibbe. There's nothing left in me. I got a job—"

"Hush, hush," she whispers; "it's all right."

"I got a job in a Fulton Street restaurant washin' dishes, but the rattle of things an' the *smell* of things —God, I went to pieces in three hours. I sneaked up to a cheap hotel an'—"

"Oh, hush," she whispers; "don't, don't tell me now."

"It was awful, Alice Kibbe; it was awful. It stank there, an' I felt the vermin runnin' over me, an' I was sick an' lonesome."

"An' then you came home, an' I was here to meet you, an' I'm so glad, so glad."

"I felt cut off from everybody an' everything there in that room, Alice Kibbe. I walked most of the way here. I'll work out yonder with Wullie an' the others. If they can get a livin' that way I can. I'll pay my way. I swear I'll work, Alice Kibbe. I was gettin' along fine here. I will stay here an' I'll keep my self-respect too. I *can* do it."

"Yes, yes, of course you can; it's all right."

The driving clouds have given Wullie's children many hiding-places to-night, and he blows long and furiously at them; but now he is done, and the wind carries his last note away off into the night, rising and falling and finally drifting beyond hearing.

"An' we were lonesome too, Mr. Tibby; we were for a fact. Come, your bed's all ready for you an' everything. Daddy will be glad in the mornin', but we mustn't wake him to-night."

"A thousand times I told myself, Alice Kibbe, I wouldn't give in an' come back, but I did. You see I'm no good. But I *will* work; I swear I will."

"Hush, hush, honey, it's all right. Everything's all right *now*. Are you tired?"

"I *am* tired, Alice Kibbe, so tired."

And so then at last he is quiet; and holding his bowed head against her breast, she rocks him back and forth, her lips against his hair; and after a while she leads him to his state-room, whispers "Good night," and leaves him there.

## *CHAPTER XII*

## *—A Crafty Bullwinkle*

You are asked to contemplate Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle in the rôle of detective, tireless solver of mysteries as well as ardent creator of them. It was certain that Mr. Tibby would engage her constant interest once she decided that he was a man of blood, and no amount of silent though very evident ferocity on his part as to her could diminish her romantic study of the possibilities of his case.

His coming back to the *Old Lame Duck* late in October after he had started out to make his way was an incitement to Mrs. Bullwinkle; her explanation of his quick return had nothing to do with the state of his health.

And surely he *had* been married, as was proved by the gold wedding ring; possibly his wife was still alive. Though actual divorce was at that time far from unknown among Mrs. Bullwinkle's bright ones of the high social levels, it was severely frowned upon early in this twentieth century, already now after twenty-odd years so callous as to that delicate operation; and she wanted to believe and finally was

quite convinced that Mr. Tibby and his wife had found a modus vivendi outside the divorce court which saved them from newspaper publicity while permitting him to live the life of brilliant secret sin for which she so admired him and to which she wished to restore him, as to his birthright, being a man of blood and probably also of wealth.

That hot August day when she and Alice had rescued him from the dump, and while he still lay unconscious in the main saloon of the *Old Lame Duck,* she had analyzed his outer clothes with the eye of an expert and had quickly cast them aside as not properly belonging to him, except the rich thick black silk socks. The dingy gray suit was of shoddy, as no one could know better than she, and the inside pocket of the coat showed the name of an almost famous Canal Street hand-me-down clothier. Moreover, by feeling the cloth of the trousers at the knees she could tell there was no piece of silk sewed inside to help prevent them from bagging at those important points; wherefore even without the name of the Canal Street clothier she would have been sure that no tailor of the elect had made his suit. The fuzzy shiny-brimmed derby hat, from Fourteenth Street, was further evidence, if further evidence were needed, as it was not for Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle.

It occurred to her more than once that Mr. Tibby was shamming. It was a fascinating thought. Attempting to trap him, she achieved nothing except outbursts of fury from him; but she had not laid aside that theory. At any rate, he belonged in a higher and more complicated sphere, she was certain, than that of the dump, and she early set herself the task of restoring him to it. Not so much because she liked him, though he was in her eyes an engaging devil with a not unexpected grandly tempestuous manner, but because she loved mysteries and worshiped class.

Besides, he might—who could tell?—be ultimately grateful to her and helpful, when he was again in his proper place on the high plateaus of the social Himalayas; so that she might yet with his aid become a companion to an elderly gentlewoman who traveled. She was also stimulated in her rôle of detective by the fact that whenever she hinted at her theories about Mr. Tibby to the *Old Lame Duck* circle they pooh-poohed her in their various ways: Alice Kibbe turning aside her head and making an impatient ticking noise with her tongue, Mr. Wheatley smiling, Mr. Tibby grinding his teeth, Wullie saying nothing powerfully.

However, as is the universal way of detectives, Mrs. Bullwinkle continued her investigations and

went her way quietly. It was of course a necessity of her life to have every day a copy of the old "New York Herald"; she never left the dump without it, even if she had to walk the long gray line from end to end to find it. As a matter of fact, though, her brother and sister salvagers there made a point of saving and advantageously swapping to her certain printed matter of which they knew she was a collector, such as copies of the "Herald," the "Spur," "Town and Country," the "Cosmetics Gazette," the "House Beautiful," and "Town Topics."

She felt that she must have the "Herald" for its social news and for its "Help Wanted—Female" columns, which that paper then gave in larger measure than any other New York daily journal. The "Herald" ran the only "personal" column in New York that was worthy of the name. Here in the brazen glare of the daily press, people sent secret and no doubt sinful messages to each other, messages thrilling to this imaginative student. Here, too, husbands and wives called to errant mates to come home and be forgiven. And here were often matter-of-fact notices, sometimes signed and sometimes not, telling of persons merely missing.

Mrs. Bullwinkle had long studied the personal columns of the "Herald" with an academic interest only. She liked to follow the signals of two obviously

iniquitous people over a period of months. She came to know, at least under their personal pen-names, many of the wicked creatures who whispered to each other over the heads of a whole city. She liked to catch in its very beginning an affair in the personal column and watch its progress until it dropped out of print. Had they quarreled? Or had they become so expert in sin that they no longer needed the personal column? All this was an absorbing academic interest for Mrs. Bullwinkle, but with the coming of Mr. Tibby she read the column with an interest far more than academic.

Several times she thought she had detected in a guarded message an appeal to Mr. Tibby to come home and be forgiven, or a truculent command to come home and help support the family he was responsible for, but it had required only one mysterious letter apiece from her in each of these cases to convince Mrs. Bullwinkle that Mr. Tibby was not missing from any of these homes.

One night in the middle of November, reading along in the kitchen of her home, Greymoor-by-the-Sea, she suddenly stopped her habitual minute chewing of an altogether non-existent bit of gum between her front teeth, took her feet down from the chair in front of her, rubbed her reading spectacles (worn privately only) on the hem of her skirt, and bent

over the paper to reread a certain paragraph.

> Missing since last January. Samson If, 35, medium height, dark complexion, black eyes. Left his home in Jericho, N. Y., to go to the city. Last seen at the railroad station. Derby hat, dark brown suit, tan oxfords, black silk socks. Wore no rubbers and has a high temper. Two lower teeth missing and one upper. Three moles on right shoulder forming points of equilateral triangle. Information gratefully received. B.I., Box 422, N.Y. Herald.

The correspondence did not flow nearly fast enough to suit Mrs. Bullwinkle. "B.I." was Mrs. Bertha If, who did not, to the detective's surprised disappointment, fly instantly from Jericho to Greymoor-by-the-Sea. She was chillingly cautious or disgustingly lukewarm, Mrs. Bullwinkle could not decide which.

It appeared, however, that Mrs. If was receiving other letters, one from as far away as Philadelphia; and there was a man at a Mills Hotel in New York who was trying to sell her information which he felt sure would be valuable to her in the search for Mr. If. Mrs. Bullwinkle wrote with a touch of hauteur that she neither expected nor would accept any gratuity.

Could Mrs. Bullwinkle send a photograph of the man she had in mind? No, because he had come into her acquaintance without baggage of any kind, and

she didn't feel justified in asking him to have new ones taken for her benefit; besides, though she did not tell Mrs. If that fact, she feared that such a request might frighten him away.

But Mrs. Bullwinkle did send a detailed description, unconsciously framing it to cover Mr. If, including details written by Mrs. If. Unfortunately she could not verify the three equidistant moles on his right shoulder or even the missing teeth. Mr. Tibby, alias Mr. If, as she soon was calling him in her mind, had recently laughed with wide-mouthed heartiness only once in her presence, and then she had unluckily been so far from him that she could not count the vacancies in his jaws. She hesitated about asking him to show her his teeth, not being able to create a plausible excuse for a request that might seem impertinent enough to rouse the disconcerting devil in him.

Often over at the *Old Lame Duck* she now spoke casually about knowing a Mrs. Bertha If, keeping her piercing eyes upon the suspect, but he gave no evidence of having been hit. Though frequently he could not or would not control his temper, he would be of course a man of cunning poise as to certain matters; wherefore Mrs. Bullwinkle was not discouraged because Mr. Tibby did not convict himself.

No, there was nothing for it but that Mrs. If

should come to visit Mrs. Bullwinkle, confront the suspect suddenly, and after that the matter was properly for other hands than the detective's. Mrs. Bullwinkle did not tell the philosophic wife of all her theories and machinations, and of her failure to trap the runaway into giving evidence against himself; she simply wrote, finally, in effect, "Come on over and see for yourself," giving explicit directions how to reach Greymoor-by-the-Sea, a fanciful name she had humorously bestowed upon her "humble little temporary shore cottage." "Mind you," continued Mrs. Bullwinkle, "I do not say certainly that this man *is* your husband. All I say is, he looks suspiciously like Mr. If, and there are certain circumstances that make it advisable for you to come at your earliest convenience."

It was not until the middle of December that Mrs. If set a date for her arrival. She would accept Mrs. Bullwinkle's kind invitation to visit her, and would come on Christmas eve, since the machinery where she worked had broken down and there was no chance of its being again in operation before the first of the year; she was therefore to have two or three weeks off.

Off? Then she must be a working woman. Her stationery and style of letter-writing had not fulfilled Mrs. Bullwinkle's idea of class; but, as she told herself, probably Mr. If had been the victim of

one of those sad mésalliances that sometimes happen in the best regulated families even on the higher plateaus. And then the loss, possibly the desertion, of her husband had no doubt made it necessary for Mrs. If to work or, rather, to work again. Mrs. Bullwinkle herself, alas, also had to work, thanks to the scandalous and spendthrift habits of the lamented Sam, God rest his soul.

Christmas eve promised to be a convenient day all around. That night aboard the *Old Lame Duck,* Mr. Marcus Wimpfheimer, lonesome and benevolent bachelor, scholar, patriot, fumigator, and exterminator, was to be the host at dinner and afterward the backer of a veritable Santa Claus to the entire dump group, including the six non-resident salvagers and their families, if any. Mrs. If could go over to the party, Mrs. Bullwinkle planned, view the suspect at length and at ease and without awkwardness, and act accordingly. It would be rather neat, too, if she could hand Mrs. If a husband and Mr. If a wife. In connection with the latter half of her last thought she told herself that a gift is always a graceful gesture, even when it isn't fully appreciated, or isn't appreciated at all; and she grinned a wicked little grin all to herself.

On Christmas eve the *Old Lame Duck* rocks with excitement from early morning; figuratively speaking of course, for she sits as solid as a brick block.

Alice Kibbe is a flushed and radiant generalissimo, with a willing army to command and resources ample to the point of positive riches. Mr. Wimpfheimer has provided the resources, and Mr. Tibby, Wullie, and the non-resident salvagers constitute the army.

No time is lost to the salvagers, anyway, for six inches of snow have fallen the night before, and small solid flakes are still sliding whitely down the western wind, so that no work is possible on the dump. A great bonfire of boxes and barrels is kept going out in front of the *Old Lame Duck,* and from time to time when the dry-land liner is too full of people and confusion Alice Kibbe shooes some of them out to the leaping red blaze that evaporates the snow before it touches those around it. The dump children deem the bonfire no hardship whatever, as Alice Kibbe can tell by their shrill thin shouts that now and then come to her, and by the sight she occasionally catches through a window of them dancing around it.

Mr. Wheatley has gone in to work. Mrs. Bullwinkle, utterly deprived of all poise whatsoever despite legendary years in that Pierrepont Street mansion, pops into the kitchen of the *Old Lame Duck* a dozen times during the day to say that she might have a guest, a Mrs. If, of whom they have heard her speak, and will it be all right, *quite* all right, to bring her over to the dinner and the tree party? A

dozen times Alice Kibbe says it will be perfectly all right, and Mr. Tibby says if she isn't a doubtful character.

Swift couriers race between the *Old Lame Duck* and Roberto Anzoni's, going sometimes even up into the heart of Brooklyn for delicacies beyond Roberto's range. A wagon comes down with a tree and treasure from Mr. Wimpfheimer. The main saloon is cleared of other furniture and filled with chairs and boxes, and from the northern end of it the tree rises from the deck of the old scow. The great kitchen, the main saloon, and the passage between are soon glistening with strings of silver and gold tinsel and throbbing with a holiday spirit in keeping with it. That magnificent bargain, the mighty stove, labors all day, and the odor of browning turkey, spices, burnt sugar, and dressing tortures appetites already sharpened by the snowy weather and the festal reputation of the season.

All mouths come in at noon for quick midday lunch, though preparations for the dinner continue unabated. Dishes borrowed from Wullie and Mrs. Bullwinkle, including their vast extra supplies of nicked and cracked crockery salvaged from the dump, have to be boiled, washed, and dried. At two o'clock Alice Kibbe is in despair, for it seems that never in this world can she see to the completion of all her plans.

Mr. Tibby, in his state-room behind a closed door unwrapping the presents and putting names on them, has to be watched lest he distribute the gifts with too much sardonic humor. She has underestimated the number of children belonging to the non-resident salvagers, some of whom have not appeared on the dump often enough for her to know them, being, despite the parental profession, school pupils in a marvelous country; and it is necessary to rush through the oven another cake and three more mince pies. She has expected Mrs. Bullwinkle to volunteer to help, but the detective is too excitedly deep in her own devious affairs to be of any considerable assistance. The fires have to be kept up, and as the afternoon wears on and young relatives of salvagers appear in appalling numbers she has to send the sturdy ones out to the bonfire and keep the others with her and out of mischief.

The oldest salvager on the dump, Mrs. Grackle, steps forward and proves a strong right arm. Mrs. Grackle's eyelids hang almost closed, so that to see anything she must raise her chin until it points at the object of her vision; but as to cooking and dinner arrangements that tall thin woman with the lead-colored face says nothing and does everything. Two or three times Alice Kibbe hugs her with silent enthusiasm and hurries on. There is now a possibility that by the time Dr. Juvenny, Mr. Wimpf-

heimer, and Mr. Wheatley come things will be almost ready.

The strain of the afternoon so upsets Mrs. Bullwinkle that she cannot make up her mind whether to wear the plum-colored taffeta or the dark-green velvet. She puts on each of them three times within an hour, and then keeps on the plum frock, not because she prefers it but because she has vowed that she will *not* make another change; which she does thirty minutes later.

Through her window she watches the trolley track running to the edge of the dump. Once or twice a woman alone walks down the spur and comes on to the bonfire to talk, possibly to ask questions; but each time she turns out to be a guest bound directly for the *Old Lame Duck,* and all are so disguised with holiday clothes and the snow that Mrs. Bullwinkle does not recognize them until they pass her humble shore cottage with the fanciful name.

At 4:30 Mrs. Bullwinkle gives up Mrs. If, and again at 5, and once more at 5:30. After that she has no charitable thoughts whatsoever about Mrs. If and is glad that her high-tempered husband has run away on the too flimsy excuse that his wife had nagged him once too often at the front door about putting on his rubbers. As foolish as they are, Mrs. Bullwinkle told herself, men do *not* run away be-

cause of a thing of that kind. No, Mrs. If was undoubtedly a provoking woman, and the rubbers were probably merely a spark that set off the dynamite which Mrs. If herself had been slowly but steadily piling up perhaps for months or even years. (The metaphors are Mrs. Bullwinkle's.)

At six o'clock the white world outside lies under the night, and the snow, now sleety little shot, nicks at her window-panes. Through her south window she sees the *Old Lame Duck* lighted up from stem to stern, pouring out promise of good cheer from window-frames square, round, diamond-shaped, and triangular.

At 6:15 Mrs. Bullwinkle, in her mind, consigns Mrs. If to Beelzebub, finally adjusts a small roll of newspapers hung as a bustle over a string around her waist, changes her dress once more, powders her face, does vague things to her Gibson-girl hair, puts a salvaged red opera-cloak over her shoulders, a lacy black Spanish mantilla over her head, and goloshes over her slippers, and speeds over to the *Old Lame Duck*. Well, at any rate she has *tried* to do her *duty*.

The dinner is about to begin, and twice already Alice Kibbe has commissioned Wullie, a perfect passive resister, to hurry over and remind Mrs. Bullwinkle. All the assembled salvagers exclaim noisily at the magnificence of her attire, but Mrs.

Bullwinkle only smiles quietly, as who should say: "Tush, this? It is nothing."

At the long festal board, made of several tables of varying heights pushed together and more or less unified with a white covering, the eager guests sit on a few chairs and many boxes. Mr. Wimpfheimer is at the head of the board, his great round bald face as white as his shock of upstanding hair, his big pale blue eyes beaming through large spectacles absently down the two rows, while he considers the derivation of the Christian Christmas celebration, quoting in his mind scraps of Latin dealing with ancient festivals.

Dr. Juvenny and Mrs. Bullwinkle are on his right, Mr. Wheatley and Wullie on his left. At the serving-table, sometime dish-washing table, Alice Kibbe commands a force including Mrs. Grackle, three stout pigtailed daughters of non-resident salvagers, and Mr. Tibby; he with a blue-checked apron tied around his neck and looking exceedingly amiable, innocent, and happy, as Mrs. Bullwinkle notes, much to her surprise. And with bright eyes and wholesome clearness of complexion, much to Dr. Juvenny's delight.

From the serving-table come the elements of the dinner, ready to eat, borne by Alice Kibbe and all her active force, except Mrs. Grackle, who carves, cuts, slices, and apportions. The faithful stove

works on, radiating heat and bringing to the boil an assortment of vessels filled with water meant for dishes when they shall have done their duty and show it. The mustard-seed sleet pelts at the windows and rattles like fairy shot on the tin covering of Saloon B. The stern of the *Old Lame Duck* sits over the creek, the surface of which has solidified since morning, and the tide now coming up demolishes the solidity with cracking, grinding, smashing sounds. The food and the cider, the cozy comfort and the thrill of a rare all-inclusive kindness melt away shyness and loosen the tongues of the guests; and presently Saloon B of the *Old Lame Duck* is so joyfully glamorous that the sleet and the grinding ice are forgotten, serving but as dim contrasting shadows to emphasize the warmth and gentleness inside.

Alice Kibbe, wearing a gray dress that becomes her and a smile that glorifies her, from time to time nods her head in that secret way she has of talking to herself; she is saying, "It's just splendid, it is for a fact." Her partner winks approvingly at her, and she scrunches up both her eyes at him. Dr. Juvenny is spoiled with attention; also the children at the lower end of the board where the shortest-legged table is. Mr. Wimpfheimer and Mr. Wheatley argue in low tones as to who is to be Santa Claus in the flesh, one claiming exemption for timidity and a squeaky voice, the other for a lame leg. Mrs. Bull-

winkle, still worrying about Mrs. If, chats in her best society manner, eating daintily and with heroically restrained casualness, the little finger of her right hand kept rigid and extended as if frozen.

Finally the dinner ends with a great clattering of boxes, scraping of chairs, humming and whispering and squealing of children, and a sudden booming of Wullie's enormous voice. Wullie is having his annual laugh. It has struck him that Mrs. Bullwinkle's frozen finger is funny. Seeing him staring at it, she remarks about some people's manners and walks haughtily from the room, calling back over her shoulder, "Come, children; let's to the Christmas tree." Mr. Tibby, having been nominated and elected for Santa Claus, and being in a mood these days to accept all service that will please Alice Kibbe, retires to his state-room to dress for the part. When the company has gone to Saloon A four women charge the dishes.

Alice Kibbe, stepping outside the kitchen door to have a moment of relaxation and quiet and to look at the white sleet sliding out of the gray night through the shafts of yellow light from the windows, collides with a visitor who is about to knock. Mrs. If is brought in, welcomed as a guest long and anxiously expected, set at the lower end of the table away from the dish-washing, and provided with food and Mrs. Bullwinkle.

"Say nothing here," Mrs. Bullwinkle whispers. "You'll see *him* later. For the moment you're simply here as a friend of mine. Do you understand?"

"Sure," affirmed Mrs. If, eating heartily and not whispering at all. At first it seems inappropriate to Mrs. Bullwinkle that the button-nosed, pop-eyed creature should dine with such concentration and gusto, when here she is, in all probability, within a few feet of her long-lost husband. However, the dinner *is* good; Mrs. If has said that she has snatched only a snack lunch at midday and has been doing about considerably since, and she is a stocky, broad-shouldered, wholesome, pink young woman whose appetite might very well under any circumstances be something more than peaked. So Mrs. Bullwinkle tells herself comfortingly; also that possibly Mrs. If wishes thus to conceal the turmoil of her raging spirit, her gusto as to food being merely another side of her furious excitement.

Now the entire party is in Saloon A, there is a ringing of sleigh-bells outside, beginning faintly, rising to a high near-by note, and then falling. There is a scraping of runners on the snowy hurricane-deck. Mr. Tibby, having secretly gone out through the kitchen door and climbed to the hurricane-deck, makes entry through a window of the pilot-house with much ceremonious noise and climbs slowly down the ladder into the main saloon,

carrying a fatly filled bag on his back, within plain sight of all. The most cynical child aboard the *Old Lame Duck,* a hoarse-voiced, red-headed iconoclast who has been digging all afternoon at the reputation of St. Nicholas, is struck dumb with sudden conviction.

Santa Claus disappears behind the screening sheet hung in front of the tree in the north end of the main saloon. Mrs. Bullwinkle, having chosen a front seat for deep purposes of her own, leans over and whispers behind her hand to Mrs. If, "That's *him.*" But she has already coached Mrs. If not to say or do anything until the proper moment of unmasking has arrived, the same to be certainly indicated by the detective.

With a swiftness which is not in the least surprising, since he has much ground to cover this night and all things are possible to the portly old man in red, the bagful of gifts intended for those aboard the *Old Lame Duck* is hung upon the tree within two magical minutes, the sheet is pulled aside, and the green wonder stands forth with winking lights and limbs burdened low.

Everybody quickly has a present and the children two or three, and more are to come. Wullie is enchanted with a telescope that stretches out a yard long. Mrs. Bullwinkle laughs prettily over a manicure set. Alice Kibbe puts about her shoulders a pink

silk scarf. Mrs. Grackle receives with silent dignity a comb gleaming with stones, rising and bowing to Santa Claus in gratitude therefor. The main saloon buzzes with appraisal, approval, and excitement as Santa Claus calls out the names in a deep voice and Alice Kibbe delivers the gifts.

When it seems that everybody has been reached more than once, including Mr. Tibby, who, it is reported, is in his state-room ill from overeating, the red-headed, hoarse-voiced boy rises, points over a dozen heads at Mrs. If, and says, "Don't forget the new lady, Santy; she came in late."

For the detective the moment awaited has arrived. Digging her guest in the ribs, Mrs. Bullwinkle jumps to her feet and goes close to the old man in red. "Yes, dear Santa, I'd like you to meet Mrs. Santa again; you lost her some time ago." Alice Kibbe stands by his side, silent and watchful, her left hand at her throat.

Now again the mustard-shot sleet is audible at the windows, and the fire crackling in the huge wood stove, and the faint creaking of the chains from which the ancient oil-lamp hangs from the ceiling, and the grinding of the ice under the stern of the *Old Lame Duck*. This is a pantomime to the spectators, who have not heard Mrs. Bullwinkle's words; they gaze with wide-open eyes at the four

chief characters there at the north end of the main saloon.

As Santa Claus bows to the new lady Mrs. Bullwinkle reaches forward to lift off his hair, beard, and mask with one swoop, whereupon her chosen words are to be, "Now you see him, Mrs. If."

But that strong left hand of Alice Kibbe's comes away from her throat and grips Mrs. Bullwinkle's little arm, halting it midway. "Sit down," she says in a voice so low that her lips barely move. "Shame on you! Think of the children!" The introduction over, the conspirator subdued and seated, the gifts come faster than ever from the marvelous tree, and again the main saloon is buzzing like a great beehive.

"It's all right," whispers the detective to her guest. "You'll see him yet. He can't escape you. *I'll* make sure of that."

"Why, that's not Samson, Mrs. Bullwinkle. Look at his feet; I've been watching them. That man's feet point straight ahead. Samson's so slue-footed you can't tell whether he's coming or going. But I'm not worrying too much about *him. He'll* come back when he gets good and ready and hungry. He's been away before; he'll come back, never fear. I put the ad in the paper, with that about his rubbers and his temper, just to shame him if he saw it. I *like* this

party; let's have a good time. Everybody else is."

After a while Santa Claus climbs the ladder again, heavy steps are heard crunching the snow on the hurricane-deck, the runners of his sleigh scrape as he rises to go on his gentle way, bells tinkle in the crisp night air outside and drift away on the wind. And now ecstatic young anarchy seizes the *Old Lame Duck.*

## *CHAPTER XIII*

## *—Under a Little Moon*

Time had long since dug himself out of his winter mud, and when Alice Kibbe let Jeb Stuart out of the screened kitchen door that early June night the tall cat went straight over to Mrs. Bullwinkle's humble little temporary shore cottage with the fanciful name to pick up the trail of his placid playfellow. Mr. Wheatley, saying he would like to occupy his seat of the mighty for a while, had climbed up the ladder into his pilot-house, where he wrote in his secret log-book, looked out over the country in all directions, studied the weather-signs, ruminated upon the pattern of life within his knowledge, which, whatever the startling differences of its individual threads, seemed strangely to weave out year after year in annual segments that appeared, at least from a little distance, amazingly like those that had gone before; so much so that one segment here and there which did after a time look different was a constant wonder to him.

Alice Kibbe sat on the cushioned window-seat in Saloon B, her head bent over her sewing. Now and

then she lifted her thread to cut it with her teeth, her gesture perhaps that of the admirable wife of Ulysses some few days ago. Still she parted her hair in the middle and combed it smoothly down to her ears, with a braid gathered at her neck, though the requirements of the mode at that early benighted moment demanded a fluffed-up barricade above her brow. Another requirement of the mode was a waist constricted in order to emphasize the bust and hips, to which she had paid no attention whatsoever, feeling no need to emphasize hers; wherefore she was a despair to Mrs. Bullwinkle, who was almost convinced that, despite her father, she was not quite a person of blood.

Mr. Tibby, in his shirt-sleeves, rolled back on his sinewy brown arms, sat also on the cushioned seat, away up in a corner, his back against the wall and his feet on the cushion, between which and his shoes he had obediently placed a protective newspaper. His arms were crossed, he was silent, and his black eyes were upon Alice Kibbe, marking, and unaware of his marking, the bend of her neck, her smooth white arms bare to the elbows, the curves and angles cut out of space by her forehead, her straight nose and her sturdy chin. Nor was Alice Kibbe self-conscious or restless under his gaze. No strain was there anywhere, but only unnoted balances and concordances and music inaudible.

Outside the dusk fell. The sun was red in the west, throwing back over the east a thinning sheen of pink. The Atlantic thundered away on the sands. The tide streamed up the channel worn out of the land, and the light wind ruffled the water into little waves that riffled against the reedy shore. The white half-moon hung a quarter-distance up the sky, where light clouds ran with the wind. All this, too, had happened before.

"Alice Kibbe, put down that sewin', an' let's go for a walk."

"No, I must finish this to-night."

"You can finish that any time, Alice Kibbe. But a night like this does not come just when we wish."

"You used to drive me back an' tell me not to come taggin' after you."

And rising he took the sewing out of her unresisting hands; she looked up at him, and getting quickly to her feet and lifting a gray rain-coat from a near-by hook she went with him out of the door. She saw her partner in the pilot-house looking out to the south, and waved her hand at him; he waved back, and Alice Kibbe and Mr. Tibby went southward along the creek toward the sounding sea, she in the lead on the narrow path.

Presently they came to a strip of beach, far from car-lines, unvisited by pleasure-boats, unfrequented by crowds; and on the shore twenty feet above the

water-line even at normal high tide was the hulk of another scow partly covered with sand. It was a place well known to these two, for many a time after a five-mile prowl in the dark days of Mr. Tibby they had rested there before returning home.

They sat on a huge timber, their backs against the side of the half-buried hulk, that had been scoured by the sand, washed by the sea, bleached by the sun. Now the night had come, a gentle night, white when the moon was clear of clouds, silver gray when they thinly veiled it. The waves drove up on the shore with mighty thrusts, but they were rhythmic thrusts, and somehow they did not seem violent. The wind was only a steady breeze, good to feel after the hot day.

They were without words for a while, Alice Kibbe and Mr. Tibby, and then turning suddenly, with an ecstatic little cry, she slid into his arms, and lay there with her face pressed against his shoulder, crying.

"Why, Alice Kibbe!"

"I knew it would come to-night. I knew it."

"Didn't you want it to come?"

"Yes. . . . But I'm afraid."

"Of me, Alice Kibbe?"

"Of myself. I feel so strange an' weak. An' then—"

"What is it, Alice Kibbe?"

"I don't know what to *call* you—you haven't any first name." And she pushed her face against his shoulder, and he felt her body shaking.

"Why, call me anything you please, you blessed big child. Make me a name, Alice Kibbe, make me a name that will be all your own."

"I've thought an' thought after one, for I knew this was comin'. But I don't know whether you'll like it. Let me call you Walter, won't you?"

"I like it, Alice Kibbe."

"Kiss me, Walter, an' hold me tight, for all my strength is gone, an' now I just want to lie against you an' feel yours . . . Do you know when I was sure I was lovin' you, Walter; not as a baby, as at first, but as a man?"

"When was it, Alice Kibbe?"

"One of those dark nights last winter when I was sittin' up there on the woodpile holdin' the lantern an' quarrelin' at you not to stop choppin' until you was very tired. While I was lookin' at your bare arms I felt my face get hot, an' it seemed that I couldn't breathe, an' I almost dropped the lantern because my left hand wanted to go up to my throat, as it always does when I'm excited. But I reckon I was lovin' you a long time before that, Walter, not knowin' it for sure. But that night I was sure."

"It seems that I've always loved you, Alice Kibbe."

"What's goin' to become of us, Walter? I've studied an' studied it, but everything is dark before me. I see no way out. Nobody will ever know how many times I've prayed not to love you, except as I did at first because you were so helpless. I prayed not to love you, so that—"

"Alice Kibbe!"

"Yes, yes, I did; I did for a fact. I said maybe he has a wife somewhere already, maybe children; I said he belongs to them, an' they ought to have him. An' then I was afraid that some day you might look at me as at a stranger, an' when I spoke to you you would draw away an' your eyes would get cold an' hard, an' then you'd get mad if I kept on speakin' to you; your eyes are terrible sometimes, Walter, an' you could kill me lookin' at me so. An' all these things come back to me now. But I fight them away; I fight them away for a little while so that I can snatch at something that is precious to me an' I want to keep. Kiss me again, Walter, an' then no more now, no more, though it stabs me to say 'no more' to you; an' then I'll lie here countin' a hundred, an' you'll hold me tight, won't you, Walter, an' not say a word; an' I think I'll hear the angels singin'. An' then I'll get up an' we must face the facts. Now I'll close my eyes while I count in my mind."

The moon came clear of a screen of clouds, and a great white light lay across the waves, slowly fading out as the dark drifting ships of the sky dimmed again the white half-moon.

And presently Alice Kibbe sat up, clasping his right hand in both of hers and holding it in her lap. "What in the *world* is goin' to become of us, Walter?" Her deep voice was low, edged with those tender throbbing little high notes that from the beginning had moved him so.

"What I must do, Alice Kibbe, is clear to me, an' now I'm ready. You've given me health, or helped me get it for myself. You gave me back my life once—oh, I knew what was goin' on back yonder in the meadow that night, though I didn't care then. An' I think you've almost given me a character. I believe I came from Manhattan, an' I believe I was in a bank there. I don't actually remember anything beyond that day I woke up lookin' at you. But I've studied myself—maybe studied myself too much sometimes—but in Manhattan an' in a bank I have a queer kind of restful homelike feelin'. It's in my nerves an' muscles maybe, an' perhaps deep in my mind somewhere. I have it strong over on Fifth Avenue around Twenty-third Street, an' in all banks. I make a point of goin' into them as often as I can; an' the talk behind the little barred win-

dows, the people waitin' in front of them there, an' the stir an' movement of everything is somehow intimately familiar to me.

"Back over yonder across the river where that great glow in the sky always is at night even the names of the streets are now beyond my reach, Alice Kibbe, but deep in me somewhere I feel that I know them well, an' the buildin's, an' the parks, an' surely some people too. Broadway, I think, is an old friend of mine, though I had to ask its name this year when I went prowlin' around over there to try myself out alone; an' so is Fifth Avenue, an' the Flatiron Buildin', an' Macy's, an' the low little Herald Buildin' with the owls sittin' all around on top of it, an' the Marlborough Hotel, an' the dingy Metropolitan Opera House, an' the red Casino Theater—I'm learnin' all their names over again, but they come too easy to be entirely strange.

"Yes, we belong together, Alice Kibbe—you an' I an' Manhattan an' a bank.

"So I'm goin' over into Manhattan to-morrow, an' I'm goin' to find a job; in a bank ultimately, though of course I'll have to start at something else. That's the first thing—a real job. After that's arranged I'll give all the money an' time I can manage to findin' out who I am—who I was. If I'm right about where I came from, sometime somebody over there will see me who knew me before. If not I'll find other ways

to trace myself. But I *will* find out who I am, an' what. I've *got* to know now. For a while I didn't care; nothing seemed to matter much one way or the other. An' I was weak an' knew it. Now I'm strong an' know it. I *will* find out who I am."

"Will you come back to see us sometime, Walter?"

"Why, Alice Kibbe! I'll stay on at the *Old Lame Duck* as a boarder if you'll only let me."

"It'll be a hard tiresome trip away over to Manhattan every day an' back."

"But look who I'll be comin' back to see every night. Maybe you don't want me as a boarder any more."

"Hush!"

"I'll not hush. I'm not a baby now."

"An' if you find yourself, Walter, an' discover that the ring on your finger means a wife already waitin' for—"

"Then I'd not know what to do. But won't you give me a year to find out, Alice Kibbe?"

"Take *all* the time there is, Walter. Don't say just a year."

"But suppose I *can't* clear up everything in a year. Suppose at the end of that time I stand exactly where I do to-day. Then—"

"Then there'll be more time, an' after that still more, until time doesn't matter to us, Walter."

"An' you, Alice Kibbe?"

"I'll be waitin'."

"Dryin' up, Alice Kibbe?"

"Burnin' up, Walter, burnin' like a leaf on a fire."

"Could we stand it, Alice Kibbe?"

"Maybe I'd have to send you away, though I think I could not do it. I've thought an' thought about that an' how it might be. Maybe you could come once a week for a time, then once a month, an' after a while . . . after a while no more." And she held his hand up against her lips, and tears were falling on it, and then her head went nuzzling against his shoulder.

"Why, Alice Kibbe! I'd come anyhow. But think if I do find myself an' do find that I'm free. Let's think of *that.*"

"Don't, Walter; I can't *bear* to think of that. I've been too lucky already. Now my luck is changin', I reckon. I'm not much account, you know, an' once my partner—"

"Yes, Alice Kibbe, I know; he told me."

"My partner came. For me he gave up—Walter, if things do sometime come right for you an' me, I can't give *him* up. He's been father to me an' mother too. I can't give him up; I can't for a fact. At first we had a hard time, *such* a hard time, an' it was all because of me; but he was never sorry, an'

never regretted, an' we were very happy. An' he'll soon be very old. I can't give him up."

"Nor I, Alice Kibbe. He's my partner, too. But there, now, maybe I'll continue being a failure. Maybe I'll some day be spongin' on him again, as I did at first."

"No, Walter, you won't. You're goin' to do something. I know it. I feel changes comin', an I'm afraid. But, anyway, I've had you this long. Nobody can take that from me."

"Such as I am, Alice Kibbe, I'm yours until the end."

"Until you forget, Walter."

"I shall *not* forget."

"Did it make any difference to you, Walter, what my partner told you about me?"

"It made no difference, Alice Kibbe. Does it make any difference to you that you know nothing of me beyond that day I came?"

"It makes no difference. You did come, an' for a while you've been here, an' I've heard your voice an' seen your face an' felt you near me. There, now, Wullie is blowin' at his children, an' it's midnight an' we must be goin' home."

"Home again, home again, jiggity jog. Don't you remember, Alice Kibbe, that night you brought me out of the meadow?"

"Shame on you, Walter; I thought you were so

near unconsciousness you didn't hear *anything.*"

"I heard everything, Alice Kibbe. Then I didn't care what I heard or what happened. I'd have died out there but for you."

"Walter, if you do find your wife, you must stand by her. I've tried to hate her, but I can't. In your sleep, at first, you said things to somebody named Mrs. McWhortle, but you were mad at her. I hoped *she* wasn't your wife, though I was terribly jealous of her. An' if you do find your wife, Walter, would she care, do you think, if I saw you every now an' then? Maybe we could meet in Central Park or somewhere like that. Maybe we wouldn't even speak to each other, but you could just walk along an' I behind you. That would be something, if I could only know that surely on a certain day I could see you.

"It isn't as if we had come to be as we are now an' knowin' all the time that she was over yonder. No, we didn't know; if we had we could have fought against it harder. But you must not do anything that would be unfair to her. You see, I could go into your state-room any time an' feel you there; an' at night out at the woodpile, an' down here by the sea, an' all along the roads we've traveled together while you've been gettin' well. An' I think that always when Wullie blows to his children of the night I shall feel you near."

"Don't, Alice Kibbe. I can't stand it."

"Walter, kiss my eyes again as you did a while ago, an' hold me tight until I count ten, an' then we'll go. . . . Now we'll stand up, Walter, an' I want you to look *hard* at everything you can see around you an' at everything in the sky. If you should forget an' I should find you somewhere I will say, 'Don't you remember Alice Kibbe?' an' maybe you'll shake your head, with the muscles at the back of your jaws standin' out in lumps because you're grindin' your teeth an' mad at an impudent question from a stranger. An' then I'll say, 'Don't you remember a night in June, down by an old boat buried in the sand, an' the moon was only a half a one, an' the little gray clouds ran with the wind high up in the sky, an' the sea was there an' a girl was there—don't you remember, oh, don't you remember?'

"Look hard, Walter, an' maybe this night would come back to you then, come back bringin' me with it. . . . Now we'll go, or we'll not get home till Wullie sends his children to bed at dawn. Do you remember, Walter, the dark wet night when you were almost wild with nervousness an' *wouldn't* come in, an' the long streets shone under the lights like silver streets, an' we walked an' walked until we were lost away up in Brooklyn, an' didn't get home

until the east was red? . . . Now we'll go. Oh, now we *must* go, Walter!"

When they came near the *Old Lame Duck* they saw a light in the pilot-house.

"He never stayed up before, Walter," and her hand trembled on his arm. "It's after midnight. I'm afraid something's happened to him."

"Ship ahoy!" Mr. Wheatley shouted down. "Is it all well with you?"

"All's well, sir," called Mr. Tibby.

And Alice Kibbe tried to shout too, but her voice died in her throat, and as the light blinked out in the pilot-house she dropped Mr. Tibby's arm and ran aboard the *Old Lame Duck* and into the main saloon. Her partner was dimly visible fumbling at the lamp-chimney. "Daddy, are you all right? Tell me, sir; tell me quick."

"Why, yes, child; I'm all right. Somehow I wanted to stay up to-night until you came home."

And they clung together there in the dark, her hands feeling over his back and face and arms.

"Why, child, are you afraid of anything? I'm sorry I frightened you."

## *CHAPTER XIV*

## *—Lesson in Remembrance*

A LESSON in remembrance, that is what Alice Kibbe is giving Mr. Tibby down there in Saloon B, alias the kitchen, alias the dining-room. I stayed a while to listen, and then I hurried up here. I had long-delayed internationally important entries to make in this private log of mine. So I said.

Lessons in remembrance, designed by that big white girl child, so dear to me, to plant cross-references in her sweetheart's mind—a sweetheart who may never be more—against that always dreaded time when he shall forget us every one. There she is down there, sitting by the table, her brow contracted in concentration, her great gray eyes eager and fearful, weaving with agonized care at a thread by which he might sometime work his way back to her from the dark cave of forgetfulness.

She tries to make a play of these lessons, tries to cover her desperate endeavors with a cloak of lightness. Walter—she has given him a new name now—said the other night that he was minded to have a man down on the Bowery tattoo on his back this

legend: "Take me back to Alice Kibbe, aboard the *Old Lame Duck,* near Greymoor-by-the-Sea, on Wullie's Creek." "Yes," she said, nodding her head up and down, "an' then you might find your wife, an' what would she think, sir, when she saw that? You'd never hear the last of it."

When she says such things these days, there is, bless her brave heart, laughter in her eyes and laughter in her voice, but it is laughter a million miles removed from mirth.

She began these lessons before he contrived a job for himself over in Manhattan almost a month ago, keeping books for a couple of small Eighth Avenue grocers. He fished one of these part-time positions out of the want-ads. It was obviously simple work, and he meant to study in advance of its requirements. He found that he knew all about bookkeeping, and then he added another customer to his list. He could manage, he says, a dozen sets of books as easy as theirs are.

Wherefore he is tremendously excited about himself. His labors in debits and credits bring him into contact with two banks. He already has visions of himself located permanently in one of them, and going forward with certain gorgeous plans of his own, plans leading on to Alice Kibbe.

Since he went away to work she has redoubled her lessons in remembrance. She used to worry lest he

wake up some morning a new man; but after a while she got used to that worry so that it did not torture her too much, and anyway even if he had so waked up he would still have been here where she might somehow have kept him in sight while she tried to restore herself to his memory. Now she worries lest he may drop back to his old past some day when he is over in Manhattan—a past that might remove him somehow beyond our utmost reach. And yet she wants him to venture forth, make his way, and discover himself. But not to lose himself to us; no, not that if it can possibly be helped.

To-night down there, she ostensibly absorbed in sewing by the table, he at ease in his favorite corner on the cushioned window-seat, his hands behind his head, and the night slowly coming up from the east, she said, "Walter, do you know what color Wullie's long hair is?"

"Yes, it's brown."

"An' what kind of brown?"

"Just brown; that's all I know."

"No, no, Walter; you must get it closer than that. It's brown like old copper, dark with glints of red in it. An' copper is everywhere about, so maybe copper would make you think of Wullie, an'—"

"Then I'd think of you? Alice Kibbe, I'd get back to you by more direct routes than that. Wherever there are flowers to be seen an' music to be heard,

wherever there is courage and gentleness, there will be reminders of you; an' New York is full of infinite darin', full of invincible gentleness. An' whatever happens the sky will always be over my head, an' the night flowers that blossom there will remind me of you an' Wullie at the same time; of him because of his bugle, of you because of your eyes."

"No, no, Walter, we *must* be very serious. You say such pretty things these days; you didn't use to say things like that."

"I didn't use to be alive, Alice Kibbe, an' now I am, thanks to you."

"What would remind you of Mrs. Bullwinkle, Walter?"

"An old nanny-goat terribly busy chewin' a piece of innutritious paper."

"For shame, sir! You were braggin' just now of Manhattan bein' kind, for to you Manhattan is all there is to New York, though it is only one borough, and there are four more, an' Brooklyn is bigger than Manhattan. Where is *your* kindness, Mr. Manhattan? Mrs. Bullwinkle means well by you; she does for a fact. Didn't she try to give you Mrs. If as a Christmas present? But look at me now; I'm as bad as you. She welcomed us when we first came here, she helped us in a hundred ways, an' don't forget that she held one end of the door upon which you came ridin' in from the rubbish-heap. There are

more pluses than minuses to Mrs. Bullwinkle."

"Yes, yes, I'll take it all back, Alice Kibbe. I'd be reminded of her whenever I opened a newspaper, for always, summer or winter, spring or fall, there are news of society an' 'Help Wanted—Female' columns. An' of course if I ever do meet an elderly gentlewoman in search of another elderly gentlewoman who has no objection to travel, I shall know whom to recommend."

"An' Mr. Wimpfheimer, Walter? You don't know him so much by frequent meetin', but the captain here has made him by report familiar to us."

"Rats, Alice Kibbe, rats."

"No, he's more than that. Besides, I don't just like the sound of what you've said."

"An' a row of books, then, an' printed letters to editors of newspapers; an' little feet, for his are no bigger than a boy's, an' he's ashamed of them an' is always tryin' to hide them; an' a certain flag with stripes an' stars on it, for he's a patriot, our partner says; an' almost anything round an' white an' soft would make me think of him."

"Well, now, that's pretty good. You're sure to see lots of things like that. An', Walter, you must be makin' these connections now whenever you can think of them, so that later on, if anything *should* happen, you'd be kind of used to the references in your mind. You see, they might come easier if they

had already been made often. An' now my daddy an' our partner, Walter, what will make you think of him?"

"Our partner, Alice Kibbe? Why—"

And then I came away to climb the ladder to my pilot-house, but that Mr. Tibby is so boyish an' spirited these days that he rushed to the foot of the ladder an' shouted up at me a lot of nonsense about fire an' water an' swords an' I don't know what all else. And I know fairly well what is happening down there now, for I have heard those lessons before, each time varied a little by Mr. Tibby's gay and tender humor but always coming to the same end.

She dug up the other night that old map of Brooklyn that I bought when I retreated—but retreated in good order, I always maintain—from the dispossessing landlord over in Forty-fourth Street. The night had come and the lamp on the table was lit, and she opened the map to cross-examine him, hoping thus to plant in his mind memorable place-names that are tied to us.

"Now, Walter," she began, "Where is Dead Horse Inlet?"

"Well, let's see. Dead Horse Inlet? Did you say Dead Horse Inlet, Alice Kibbe?"

"Yes, I did; you know I did. You just can't answer, so you're bluffin' for time, thinkin' maybe I'll say something that will give you a hint. But I won't

do it. If I make these lessons too easy they won't do you any good."

"I was just foolin', Alice Kibbe. Dead Horse Inlet is deep in my memory. It's between Barren Island an' Plumb Island."

"Very good, Walter; very good indeed, an' I'm sorry I quarreled at you." And she walked over to the seat and patted his head as if he were a bright boy who had distinguished himself.

"An' where is Willetts Hassock, Walter?" She had sat down again under the light, and her fingers were moving rhythmically at her work.

"It's a little above the eastern end of Plumb Island."

"Hog Point Creek?"

"At the western end of Plumb Island, windin' around between it an' one of Brooklyn's toes that are always dabblin' in the water. An' that's where Wullie desecrates the Sabbath so often with fishin'-lines."

"Ah, I'm so proud of you, an' you may go to the head of the class. You might see at any time a plumber or a bricklayer usin' a plumb-bob. You'll always be seein' horses, though I hope they'll be alive. An' when you eat bacon or ham or sausage—"

"Then I'll think of hog an' then I'll think of you, Alice Kibbe? No, no, I wouldn't make that last jump if I could."

"Never mind, smarty; I wasn't goin' to say that at all. I was goin' to say you might think of Hog Point, then of Wullie, an' so on."

"But Willetts Hassock, teacher? How shall I ever leap from hassock to Alice Kibbe? What *is* a hassock, anyway?"

"Why, you sinful wretch, did you never kneel on one of those little cushions in church? *They* are hassocks. You go next Sunday with Mrs. Bullwinkle an' me, an' you may feel a hassock under your knees."

"When I'm in a church, Alice Kibbe, I'll need no hassock to remind me of you." And his voice was suddenly very sober, and he covered his face with his hands.

I was reading by the table light. I did not raise my eyes, but I knew that my partner rose and went over to the eastern window and stood staring long out into the night, where there was nothing to see. Dear God, what a wife she would make, and what a mother!

Well, I suppose by now the lesson for to-night is coming to an end. He will have received his head-mark or reward of merit or whatever it is, and she will be sitting again under the light, her quick smooth fingers busy with something that is good into which she has inevitably worked beauty also. He will be taking his ease by the window. They will not

talk a great deal, for they have passed beyond the need of many words. Peace is with them, a blessed peace.

Perhaps all her lessons, to the preparation of which she gives such exquisite care, lest they become tiresome under repetition, are entirely useless for the purpose she has in mind. Dr. Juvenny thinks so; but neither he nor I would tell her that. And, anyway, who knows whether science can measure the reach of that which is in Mr. Tibby and Alice Kibbe. I think if I were he and she came knocking at my door I should hear her and be certain who it was if the door were of steel and ten feet thick.

Dr. Juvenny is a professed materialist, a gentle heathen, and a proved idealist. He counsels Alice Kibbe, by way of indirect words, since he feels that it is not for him to advise her about any man; he counsels her to forget what may happen to-morrow and to enjoy to the limit each day as if there were to be no to-morrow. For, says he, to-morrows are not to be trusted, nor any power or powers that are supposed to have influence over them.

And having said it he presently is planning all manner of things to be done upon the premise that to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow are to be rather good days, after all; at any rate, days to be taken account of.

But he is all right, portly Dr. Juvenny is. With his

stern and eloquent backing, we have at last persuaded Alice Kibbe to accept a first mate here aboard the *Old Lame Duck*. With two salaried sons bringing home bags of money of a Saturday night, it was wicked of her, we said, not to have in help and thus distribute some of the wealth. So Mrs. Grackle, having won her marshal's baton on Christmas eve, is now first mate. Good Heavens, my metaphors are as mongrel as Mrs. Bullwinkle's. And Alice Kibbe says she feels like a lady of leisure and fashion and blood dwelling upon a very high plateau of the social Himalayas.

And very happy these days is my partner, even as things are, with possible disaster always just around the corner. She sends us forth in the morning full of good food and good spirits, walking to the end of the spur with us and waving her hand to us as if we were going on a long journey; and indeed one of us some day may never come back. And at night she is there to welcome us home again, for we two children of hers meet by agreement up in Brooklyn and come home together. I always make him get off the car first, saying that my leg is troublesome and that he must help me down from the step.

One afternoon he telephoned me that as he would be delayed I should not wait for him but come on home at the usual time, alone. I hope if what we all live in dread of actually happens, I shall not have to

tell it to her, and see her eyes, and her hand fumbling at her throat. If I were a praying man, I know a prayer I should want to say. And I will say it whether or no, here in this old log-book, that now has everything in it, even a cuss-word or two at the *Old Lame Duck* when she has refused to answer the rudder and has gone nosing into all manner of devilment. Lord, if my partner is to lose this man, let it not be for me to tell her. Amen. There, now, I wrote "Amen" too quick. That was a selfish prayer. Lord, if you can see any way at all to steer them along together, it would be a sweet mercy to do it. As for me, if anything is coming to me, which I doubt, being a loose-mouthed old hellion—but if there is, Lord, credit it to the account of my partner. Amen again.

July 3, 1903. Wind E by S. Weather hot all day but cool to-night; at least it is out here on board the ramping *Old Lame Duck*. Forecast for to-morrow: probable showers, though they may blow over, sprinkling us with only a few shining drops. Latitude and longitude, bless Pat, the same as last time.

## *CHAPTER XV*

### *—Cap, It's Come at Last*

JULY 4 is here. Alice Kibbe's two salaried sons are at home on holiday, Mrs. Grackle is away for the same reason, and it is like old times aboard the dry-land liner with the multishaped windows, near Greymoor-by-the Sea, on Wullie's Creek.

"We'll lie late an' luxuriously," Mr. Tibby has said the night before. "We'll lie late two days—halleluiah," amended Mr. Wheatley, "an' we'll not hurry to catch any town-bound trolley either." And so they do, wherefore Alice Kibbe, beginning breakfast at seven, must call twice at her partner's door and three times at Mr. Tibby's.

"I'll tell you what let's do," this Walter person announces at the table, leaning over to look piercingly at Alice Kibbe.

"Tell it then," she urges.

"By all means," agrees Mr. Wheatley, "without starin' like a mesmerizer."

"Let's get a lunch ready, go over to Coney Island before any crowd is there, have a swim at Brighton, an' start back early in the afternoon just as the big

floods rush upon Coney Island from the city. This is my party, an' I'll finance it. I'm feelin' that plutocratic. I am for a fact."

"Don't mock me, Walter Tibby, but I'm for it. What says the ex-captain of the *Bessie B,* the one-time high private of the Louisiana Hellions, the former cotton factor of Crebillon, the sometime affability man of Dr. Simon Petrie, the present right-hand man of Marcus Wimpfheimer, fumigator an' exterminator?"

"Forward—forward with foolishness, an' let sober wisdom beware."

"Very well. Then you two will do the dishes, while I, Alice Kibbe, once an orphant child, at present purser, stewart, an' bosun of a certain suspicious craft lyin' low on Wullie's Creek with no colors showin', all sails set, an' tuggin' at her anchor—I'll get the lunch ready."

The *Old Lame Duck* carries only children this morning, children playing together and so unafraid. Mr. Wheatley, snapping his fingers, falls behind with his drying duties, and to slow up Mr. Tibby's intense and swift washing he hands back dish after dish to be done over with the remark that it *could* be better washed. There is argument, there are hot words that blaze and burn no one, there is Alice Kibbe stamping her foot at Mr. Tibby for sloshing water out on the floor and at her partner for drop-

along to be here to-day, though I said nothing of my plan, bein' a dramatist of life, as Mr. Wheatley says. Come, we'll get off here."

"Aren't we spendin' too much money?" asks Alice Kibbe.

"Listen at the miser." Mr. Tibby presses her hand against his body with his arm. "Our holiday so far has cost us almost nothing. I'm celebratin' all sorts of things to-day, Alice Kibbe. Come along."

Mr. Wheatley is eager; she is eager but still a little doubtful. They are in the current of the crowd moving tremendously toward the main entrance. Already the thrill of the thousands has touched them, so that they are impatient because they can't rush in; but Alice Kibbe will remember that at one time she hung back.

By luck they get good seats in the grand stand—such things do happen—and this impromptu entertainment looks all the more promising because it was unplanned, having the bloom of perfect freshness upon it, untouched by the anticipatory mind which turns all things over and over and somewhat dims and bedraggles them.

Cool here in the grand stand, a multitude of new impressions falling tingling upon the three partners. They get from the same crowd different items of interest: Alice Kibbe notes the pretty dresses, the colors, a child here and there; Mr. Tibby, the wise

horsy talk all about him, the forecasts about animals with delightful names that are certain to win in a romp; Mr. Wheatley, the movement and sway of the spectator crowd in the grip of a common emotion, he studying without knowing it the various strange faces—strong, sweet, foolish, meanly fearful, bright and young, blank.

Music; cheering at any small event; men, seeming so small they are so far away, running about the track apparently doing nothing, but probably doing gigantically important things; the occasional sight of a quick-stepping racer, bandaged about the legs, blanketed, hooded, and his eyes looking twice as large as life—the precious creatures!

The races are presently to begin. Programs are scrutinized, past performances of this or that animal intensely reread about in newspapers, tipsters' bulletins, dope-sheets gray and soiled through devoted cramming for this important day. Many men and not a few women leave their seats, and returning whisper to their companions that they have laid down so much on this or that exciting name.

The races are presently to begin, the tempo of things is rising rapidly, and the three partners yield themselves freely to it. Alice Kibbe's eyes are sparkling; she turns her head quickly this way and that, her left hand now and then fluttering at her throat. Mr. Wheatley, on her left, leans back as if unper-

ping a saucer to the same—"But it didn't break, bosun; I'll swear there isn't a crack in it; listen, don't you hear the ringin' sound when I tap it with a finger-nail?"—yes, there are this morning three very happy partners here together.

By nine o'clock they are off, Mr. Wheatley carrying the bundle of bathing-suits, Mr. Tibby the lunch in a shoe-box, "which," says Alice Kibbe, "can be thrown away afterward an' no harm done, an' no basket to bring back home." Alice Kibbe is between them: a small pale old man with sea-blue eyes and a pain-sweetened face, limping slightly; a taller brown-faced man with big black eyes and steel springs in his step; the girl taller than either of her partners, her face full of the morning. They are all in light roomy summer clothes; none is at all dressed up, for Coney Island is a near neighbor, and this is but a neighborly call; Alice Kibbe with her rakish cap that no wind, she vows, can *ever* blow off.

On to the trolley, on to Coney, on to Brighton and the beach. Here are more people than they expected, but no great crowd yet; and they find a bit of sand that is not yet invaded by outsiders. There is enough of it for racing, wrestling, and ultimate lunching.

The weather is warm, the paper has said showers, and there is occasional cushioned bumping of

vast things up among the clouds. The three partners are not afraid; let showers come if they will, their bathing-suits are already wet and home is not far away. But showers do not come, and for all their troubling of the waters of the Atlantic Ocean the three partners are sun-dried by noon, for which Mr. Tibby can barely wait, crying out his hunger.

Leaving Coney Island at about two, they must pass near the Sheepshead Bay Race Track; then a near-by place of periodic open-air excitement and stimulation for New York's desk-bound hordes, swept by sea-breezes on the warmest days, but so very sinful with the betting of many daring men that the sons of virtue later suppressed it; now all that ground which felt the feet of Broomstick, Man o' War, and many another slim-legged horse with an artist's heart is a hunting-ground for realtors, blooms with new little houses, and is excited only by the approach of instalment dates.

That day between two and three of the clock more than thirty thousand people were at the track or on their way to it; and noting the crowds from a car window, Mr. Tibby has an idea. "We'll go to the races this day, partners. It is so near home that it's a neighborhood institution, an' we must in duty support it. An' we'll bet—but only lightly, Alice Kibbe, lightly—if we see something that appeals to us. I have the money for the tickets, an' I meant all

turbed, but his pale many-lined face is flushed, his eyes look intently at whatever engages his attention. Mr. Tibby, on her right, is absorbed in his program.

"Shall we bet on the first race?" He does not look around as he asks it, and his voice is strained with excitement.

"No, let's wait a while, anyway," says cautious Alice Kibbe. "We'll see how things go."

"Well, here's Land of Clover runnin', an' Foxhunter, an' Lavator, an' a lot more. Which *would* you bet on if we were gamblin'. Let's see who wins among us three."

"I kind of like Land of Clover," Alice Kibbe admits.

"Lavator," says the desperate grim gambler on her left.

"Foxhunter for me then." Mr. Tibby remains deep in the printed entries.

The horses for the first race come up the track toward the thunderous grand stand; the crowd wants to let itself go, and here is an opportunity. The little jockeys in silk that shines, their knees poked up by the short stirrups, sit their mounts with beautiful ease, the racers all pushing away the earth under their light steps, some of them walking or trotting steadily, others fidgeting and curveting and shaking their heads.

And then a halt to get them in line—they're off, and the grand stand and all the other places where spectators are massed roar mightily. A clot of little horses far away, after a while a string of horses and streaks of color just above the inner fence, and wild fanatics standing and bellowing at their favorites by name to come on home. This is an event for Land of Clover. Alice Kibbe has loved the name; now she loves the horse out there for her to see.

Having been a winner for fun, she is minded to bet on the second race in earnest, but only among herself and partners; so that three dimes are staked on the second race, with the understanding that if none of their choices is ahead at the close that gambler wins whose horse is nearest the front. Cinquevalli is Alice Kibbe's horse, having so fancy a name; but Mr. Wheatley's Rigodon is a clear winner.

"For the third race," says Mr. Tibby from his program, "Alice Kibbe's horse has picked himself out. She could not resist Broomstick."

But, alas, Mr. Wheatley's Gallant is the victor.

And so the races go, and what a colorful lot are the winners—Duke of Kendall, Duora, Roehampton, Vagary, Vividu, Trouville; and the sixth and last race is here, and Mr. Tibby, looking ahead, has already chosen for his champion a horse named

Past. He has been bragging about the prospects of "my Past"; his Past will come romping home without a doubt.

And Alice Kibbe is suddenly silent. But all about them the spectators are keyed up to the highest pitch of the day: this is the end; they must make the best of the sixth race.

In the long wait before the start Mr. Tibby is without words, staring ahead of him. Mr. Wheatley proclaims the points of Tribes Hill, all being imaginary to him, he not knowing even the color of that animal; but he must cover the silences of his partners. Alice doesn't know whether she has made a choice for this event, and doesn't care.

And now they're off—Dark Planet, Neither One, the Regent, Past, Lowly, and more. Mr. Tibby draws away from Alice Kibbe, and she is hurt. She notices out of the corner of her eye that the muscles are bunched at the back of his left jaw. What can he be so furious about? She lightly touches his knee with her hand, and he draws further away, his eyes on the streaming horses; and then he rises and walks hurriedly along the row of seats to an aisle, goes down that, and passes out of sight, never looking back.

"It's all right," whispers her partner. "He's just gone—you know where. He'll be back in a minute."

Past has not made a decent showing since the

start. Could Mr. Tibby have been so angry about that?

"Wait right here, Cap; don't move. I'll be back. Don't move, *please!*"

And she too is gone. The race is done, Tribes Hill first, Dark Planet second, Arden third, Past merely an also-ran. Cheering, shuffling of feet, standing up of thousands, and an old man sitting still in his seat. People passing look down upon him with pity or grinning good humor; he's a winner and looks a loser. But here he must stay, for there must be a rallying-point for the partners among all these moving men and women. Alice Kibbe will be back in a minute, smiling shamefacedly, with Mr. Tibby by her side.

She is out of the grand stand now. He follows her capped head, above most heads, a minute or two, until it disappears. As for her, the crowds are thickening about her, people coming from the paddock, from the track-side, from the grand stand. She must ask an embarrassing question, and does it without a tremor, and having the information she is compelled to throw herself against the strongest current of the moving mass. Presently she is putting aside people, who scowl at her, but she is not concerned about them or that; she *must* get on.

At last she stands near the door marked "Men." She will wait and watch, but waiting is a torture to

her. Her clothes are crumpled and torn. That hair of hers which is usually so firmly and smoothly in place has loosened, and there floats about her white face a filmy cloud, which she tries with nervously shaking hands to restore to order, while she waits.

A big boy passes, and pressing a dollar into his hand she tells him to go into the door marked "Men" and shout the name of Mr. Tibby. She will be here by this post. "Shout it loud an' a lot, boy, please. Hurry!" That he does; the door is opening constantly, and she hears him bellowing it over and over again, "Mr. Tibby, Mr. Tibby—wanted outside." And the boy is back saying there is no answer.

She must get back in front of the grand stand and look up to where her old partner waits. Mr. Tibby will be back there now. She knows he will. But returning she is going directly against the main current, and it is a fight. She is bumped and thrown about, and does not notice what is happening to her body. Taking an outer edge of the moving flood she works back to a point in front of the grand stand. It is half empty when she gets there.

She sees Mr. Wheatley, standing against a post by their seats, and waves her hand at him, but she is too far away from him, too deeply hidden for him to see, though he is searching the crowd with his eyes ceaselessly.

Well, now she must go out through the main en-

trance, somehow. Why? Why should he have gone out there? So the reasonable side of her mind asks, and she does not try to answer. She remembers how he drew away from her, remembers his silence, remembers the evidences of his furious excitement, his going away without a word and without looking back. Has it come at last? No! she shouts at herself. She will find him outside the big gate, and the reason for his being there will be so simple and easy and obvious when she has it that she will be taken aback and will not know what to say.

Running far around an outer edge of the homegoers, she reaches quickly the main entrance. This is the neck of the bottle. She tries to wedge herself into the crowd here, but it is too tight, and as it flows on through the entrance she is scraped off it several times, at last falling against the fence. A man helps her up. She stands a moment staring at the fence, runs along it until she thinks she has found in it as low a place as there will be; and she climbs it, the crowd cheering her lustily; and she tumbles heavily on the outside of it, the soles of her lightly slippered feet burning, her body lying huddled against the smooth boards.

But she is up in a second. Here the crowd, swelling out in more space, is thinner. She can make progress by pushing and shoving and fighting; and so she does, her eyes studying the backs and faces

of men. Here are all manner of vehicles standing about, waiting, and some have already started away. She gives the moving things only a fleeting glance; they're gone, lost; and she runs along by those that are still waiting, partly filled with people.

And now she is near a long car on a track; one of many. It seems already packed full, but more people outside struggle like maniacs to get into it. On the first seat forward, by a window, she sees a dark-brown profile. Everybody else inside, it appears, is looking back out, shouting or grinning at those not aboard. That man forward, his shoulders slumped down, gazes straight ahead of him into the car. No crowd, no panic hurry, nothing seems to exist for him, except what is in his mind at the moment.

"Mr. Tibby! Mr. Tibby!" She is screaming like a mad woman, waving both hands at him, and is ashamed. "Mr. Tibby! Mr. Tibby!"

She has attracted the attention of the mob, and it yells at her, from the car, from all around her.

"Lost your pal, little girl?"

"Good-by, my lover, good-by!"

"Oh, he'll be back, when the robins nest again."

"Let 'im go, sissy; there are others."

"Mr. Tibbee! Mr. Tibbee!"

Her face flaming, she attacks the mass near her, flinging aside people as if they were small clods. But there is good nature, too, in this holiday crowd, and

something finer; and a path begins opening before her, and a dozen stalwarts are fighting on her side. If she wants to get aboard that car to find some man they will put her there or have a fight.

Now the wheels of the heavily loaded car whirl on the rails, little clouds of sand puffing out from under them. The wheels catch a hold; the car crawls, gathers speed, shakes off a score of people hanging to it, is gone; those on board now singing together, "Good-by, my lover, good-by," their voices thinning quickly beyond hearing. And Alice Kibbe, her left hand across her eyes, her right out in front of her, moves like a sleep-walker back toward the main entrance, slowly.

That quick chivalry which is in mobs of men is about her like a guard, now that she has attracted its attention and touched the best that is in it; and as she goes forward slowly, stumbling, hands that do not touch her are lifted to catch her if she falls, and the way is made clear for her.

Straight as her faltering feet can carry her she goes through the gate, on to the grand stand, to where she knows beyond any doubt whatsoever her old partner will be. They have been separated before, and always he was where he said he would be, whatever the time or the circumstances.

And he is there now, and he sees her coming, a tall white figure bareheaded and bowed, her face

partly covered, the guard about her; and he rushes down to meet her as fast as his crippled leg will let him, and the guard opens, and they are together again. Together again, her old partner and she; and to her tortured mind there is infinite comfort in that, in the feel of his arms about her.

"Cap, it's come at last."

They are seated now, and the guard has gone, and she is crying on her partner's shoulder. Knowing nothing to say, for there is nothing, he holds her firmly around the waist with his right arm and pats with his left hand her right that lies so limp and dead in his lap.

What she has to say, and must say as quickly as may be, comes in gasps, with painful breathless intervals between. "I saw him. I shouted. I fought like a drunken woman to get to the car he was in. He never looked out. Never saw me. Never heard me."

"Easy, child; there's no hurry."

"An' the people yelled at me, sir, an' I was ashamed; yelled an' laughed an' said things that hurt me. But then they turned right around an' were so good. It's like it has been with him. We had him, an' everything came to be so fine. Now he's gone. I don't understand, I don't understand anything. Nothing for me in all the world or anywhere is steady but you, sir. Whatever trouble comes, when-

ever it comes, I know where you'll be, I know what you'll do."

Belated horsy people hurrying along the walk below them look up curiously at the little old man and the big girl, both in white now soiled gray, almost lost among the multitude of empty seats. The vast drab place is already virtually deserted. Here where a moment ago thirty thousand buzzed and roared and stamped and trampled, quiet falls, layer upon layer, invisible snow covering and hiding roughnesses of sound and movement. Alice Kibbe is quiet at last, spent. Though the light of day is all about, yet night is felt in the east, coming. And presently the partners, both wounded now, stand up unsteadily, and holding to each other lest one be somehow lost they go out of the gate and on toward home, two partners only.

## *CHAPTER XVI*

## *—Then You'll Remember Me*

On the way up from the Sheepshead track Mr. Badeneau went through a period of irritating confusion. Coming out of the grounds he had thought the month was August, 1902, and that he was returning from an ordinary Saturday afternoon event, with the crowds of which he was familiar; but two race-track addicts in his car arguing about the relative merits of the horses of July 4, 1902, and those of this July 4, 1903, aroused his suspicions. A queer, panicky, amputated feeling seized him. He picked up a newspaper lying on the seat by him, seeing instantly therein that he had lost, somehow, somewhere, about eleven months. He sat staring in front of him, trying desperately to place himself in time. Was this what Dr. Addis had meant by saying he might go to pot?

He had read about people who had lost segments of their past. He knew that there must be many cases that do not get into the daily prints because they are not spectacular enough, or for other reasons; but he had always had the notion, not uncommon, that

though the loss of sections out of their lives, temporarily or even permanently, was one of those many disconcerting or dreadful things that are continually happening to people, it was not anything that could possibly happen to him.

Why not? Well, it had; and he was ashamed of it and would say nothing about it. Doctors? He was through with doctors; he would be careful of himself, go back to work, and hold his tongue. At any rate, he was perfectly all right now.

Saturday night he spent at the Hotel Manhattan. Sunday morning, walking up Fifth Avenue and hearing music and singing, he turned into a church. It was on impulse; he was not habituated to churches. Yielding to the not unusual desire to build up a fair front of reasonableness for a mere impulse, he told himself that he had come into the church because he had much time to kill, had already walked a good deal, and so on.

After a while, following the example of those about him, he was kneeling on a little cushion. He did not listen to the ancient petition for gifts coming from the pulpit; his mind was concentrated upon the small cushion under his knees. Leaning his head on the bench in front of him, he looked down at the thing, studying it a long time, for the petition was extended and detailed. What the deuce *was* it called? He knew that name, he was certain of it;

and as he felt around for it in his mind he thought he could just touch it without laying firm hold upon it.

When finally the prayer was done Mr. Badeneau sat up straight again, but he kept his foot against the cushion.

Hassock! There it was; he felt the thrill of a conqueror. And the word had two sensations about it. At first he was smiling; then a wave of the most poignant melancholy swept over him. Now he was not seeing the preacher up there gesturing and the quiet audience listening to the accusing and promissory sermon; in his imagination there was, instead, for him, all at once, a tense atmosphere of expectation, a tremendous surge of organ music, a notion of people bustling about, a vision of black-clad men moving up one aisle and of girls in white going up another.

Mr. Badeneau was disturbed about himself; and rising he went back to the hotel and sat hunched up in a deep chair in the lobby, thinking. Was this what those missing months were going to do to him? Was he now to be forever watching his mind at work, forever puzzling over that continuous drift of queerly assorted stuff in the stream of thought? Perhaps he'd become one of those awful bores who train themselves to take note of their dreams and

then pester other people with accounts and mad interpretations of them.

Heretofore he had paid little attention to his mental processes; he hadn't noted a dream once in six months. Well, he'd be back in the bank next week; and the job there, engaging all his attention, would crowd out this kind of infernal nonsense. So he thundered at himself, grinding his teeth; and presently he was saying over and over to himself, "Hassock, hassock—Willetts Hassock."

Catching himself saying it, he jumped up and rushed to the dining-room. Under his table was another of those insane cushions; not here for kneeling but for short legs and feminine feet. Mr. Badeneau kicked it out of the way, and when the waiter came back from the kitchen he had it removed. And all through the meal he felt vaguely remorseful; he had done something he wished he hadn't done. It was as if he had hurt some one and was keenly sorry for having done so.

And he was furious with himself. All right, he would surrender. He would go back to that chair in the lobby and put in the entire afternoon watching his thoughts. He would see just how much of a lunatic he was. After dinner, however, hassock was no longer a word warm in his mind; it had dropped out of his mental sight. The bank and his future

work there absorbed his attention. He would take charge of his old department if that was desired, and he would answer questions cheerfully, or at least with quiet courtesy. After all, the patrons of his special department wanted to know things that he could tell them, so why shouldn't he do it and do it graciously? The information was to him simple and obvious, but to them it wasn't; and they no doubt knew a great many things that were mysteries to him, and things just as important, cosmically speaking, as stocks and bonds, notes and mortgages.

Partly, that was what he was there for—or would be there for—to answer questions. Moreover, he would answer the same question over and over again without show of irritation; repetition is often necessary to clear up or enforce an idea. Yes, he would continue to advise, and with more affability than in the past, old Mrs. Flimber once a week to leave undisturbed the preferred stocks and gilt-edged bonds her husband had chosen for her with a foresight almost miraculous, considering Mrs. Flimber's cast of mind.

Of course if they again suggested at the bank that he become a loan officer in the main section he would now take that delightful berth, provided McCauffrey was managing the Women's Department successfully, as no doubt he was.

It occurred to Mr. Badeneau, as it had been oc-

curring frequently since yesterday, that he owed a heavy debt of gratitude to some person or persons unknown to him. He realized that he was a man physically made over. He must have been a trying nuisance when he first disappeared last year, with his childish tantrums and sickly nonsense. Nor could he have paid for patience; as he was well aware, the General and his other two furtive friends of Park Row had left him all but penniless.

Well, if any person strange to him ever claimed to know him he would cultivate the offered acquaintance; he would try to trace himself through those lost eleven months, try to work back to the friends who, he felt certain, had been so helpfully kind to him.

Lost months? No, not lost; the glorious sensation of magnificent physical well-being that was now his, was proof that they had been spent to good advantage, so far at least as he was concerned. He had a cordial feeling for his friends—surely he had been with people who met the requirements of that great word—during his time in the mists of forgetfulness. Perhaps he'd ultimately put a detective to work going back over his trail, though he disliked telling anybody about his involuntary excursion into the abnormal.

His legs were insistently demanding that they be exercised; and after supper, the sun dropping lazily

into a huge soft bed of pink out at the end of Forty-second Street, he turned into Fifth Avenue, now lying quiet under the spell of the Sabbath. Once he would have strolled laxly along, his shoulders drooping; this evening, without definitely willing it, he marched ahead like a soldier. This wholesome muscular habit was another gift from that wonderful dark period, to which he was more and more grateful as he noted the changes in himself.

Sitting far down in Central Park, beyond the Mall and near the reservoir, he watched the night falling slowly. Children and old people had gone home, or were on the well lighted edges of the park near the gates; here in the dim depths among the trees were those who wanted to be alone, as nearly as might be, with each other. A year ago he would have fled furiously from all this; now he wanted to be here. The drifting forms in summer white, the subdued laughter so heavily freighted with intimate secrets, the whispering voices softened to their utmost, so magically transformed that even coarse voices of every day were mild and sweet upon the ear—somehow, he, too, for the moment, was a lover and knew it.

Driven by necessity, a couple sat on his bench, as far away from him as they could get. He hurried away, plunging down a dark walk, so that they might have the bench, at least for a while, all to themselves.

Now he was upon the high-set graveled path running around the reservoir, following a vague impulse. For him there was a new friendliness about water, and this that smiled and dimpled and danced under the lights was music to his mood. Several times as he circled the reservoir he looked back over his shoulder; no one was there, and he was surprised.

Suddenly he noted that the word "hassock" was at the very center of his consciousness again. His mind moved round and round about it, looking eagerly for something it wanted to find and somehow couldn't. He marched on with long strides, the graveled path welcome under his feet after the cement walks; and presently where the word "hassock" had been were two words—Alice Kibbe. His mind seemed to breathe a sigh of relief and relax, and Mr. Badeneau left the reservoir and started briskly on the back track to the Hotel Manhattan, his shoulders squared, his head up, whistling some old tune the name of which he could not recall. Yes, he could, and he was immensely proud of himself; it was "Then You'll Remember Me."

And the next week the bank swallowed him again, and Alice Kibbe too.

## *CHAPTER XVII*

### *—Patrol on the Old Roads*

Wind N by W, and it will probably be keenly cold by morning. For these twelve months since last Thanksgiving day what shall we aboard the *Old Lame Duck* be thankful for? For me there is still my tall gray-eyed partner, who can yet muster up a gallant smile, though there is that in it which pleads with you not to look too closely at it.

For her? If I had asked her to-day over yonder in Manhattan I know she would have been quick with a long list of things, all so little by the side of the one great loss. Except for Monday washings of clothes and Tuesday ironings of the same, First Mate Grackle has been back on the dump since Mr. Tibby went away, because, said Alice Kibbe, "I must be doin' a lot of things around here now or—well, it won't be good for me, sir, if I don't"; and as this was a holiday for me I argued that she, too, should have one, and I suggested that I should like to go over to Manhattan and prowl around, if she would go with me. We had dinner over there in one of those white, antiseptic, hospital-like places, which nevertheless have remarkable coffee and batter-

cakes; and then we walked a great deal, and even rode around Central Park in a hansom-cab as a luxurious lark; all day watching faces, the faces of men.

I shall be stove up for a week from all that prowling, but to-night my incredible partner is outside making her usual rounds along the roads that she and Mr. Tibby once traveled together. It is not for a person of so-called common sense to say that it is childish of her to expect to find him she seeks away down in the flat lands of South Brooklyn on a chilly autumn night; and my partner may follow the call of her heart, and my blessings shall go always with her.

The very night of that July 4 when Mr. Tibby disappeared she set out to patrol the paths that had helped to lead him back to health—and her to heaven, for a moment. She said she might have been mistaken about seeing him on the car, that maybe he had a dizzy spell there at the races and was even then trying to make his way back home, perhaps still confused and needing help. Who shall measure the fears of a woman at once a sweetheart and a mother—and the hopes?

I wanted to go with her then, but it was not in my legs to do any more that night; and I persuaded her to take Wullie with her. Outside, walking around, he could keep an even better watch than sitting at

home, upon his fair flock feeding across the sky. And he has walked with her ever since.

Wullie says almost nothing, she reports, stalking along silently and tirelessly by her side, his big bugle slung on a string around his shoulder, his eyes ranging the heavens above him. And hers? They are ranging the earth out in front of her. And now after nearly five months what hope could there be for her out there upon those old roads of a happy time gone? I do not ask her that question. She might say that maybe Walter—for so it is that she still thinks of him—had forgotten all our names, but that coming somehow across one of their familiar trails he would feel it warm and follow it along. Maybe, maybe, maybe—it's a word she speaks a hundred times a day and thinks a thousand.

And so they are out to-night, and even if Wullie is gently mad and countless millions of miles removed from his loves, he is probably closer to them than she is to Mr. Tibby, though he be only over yonder across the river beneath that dim golden glow in the sky.

At times, she reports, and whether they be up in the settled regions of Brooklyn or down along the shore, Wullie will pull the shiny old bugle around on its string, put it to his mouth, and send its searching notes rolling out into the distance; and turning to her he will say, "Mr. Tibby's juist lost behint the

clouds, Alice Kibbe, so I'll gie 'im another wee blastie." To me his wee blasties, when he is blowing for Alice Kibbe's lost one, seem strong enough to cross the river and go billowing up Broadway, waking ancient echoes along that primeval road that once knew the voices of shepherds and the little feet of sheep.

On Sundays and all other days free of work I say I want to go to Manhattan, and she always thanks me with her eyes for suggesting it myself. I am often reminded over there now of those days when I was trying to outflank a real job after the desperate retreat, but in good order, from Dr. Simon Petrie's painless parlors. We go prowling along the streets, and when we are tired we rest in parks, railroad stations, hotel lobbies, and sometimes even in churches when a sudden attack of weather compels us to seek shelter in one of them, though I avoid them when I can, now.

The first time we went into one—I mean the first time since Mr. Tibby dropped away—a rain-storm chased us into a church on Madison Avenue. The morning service was going on, and presently we were kneeling upon those little cushions on the floor. I felt her left hand fumbling at my right, and with our heads bowed we held to each other tightly; and I thought of her lessons in remembrance back home, over the river, aboard the *Old Lame Duck*.

Hassock! Willetts Hassock! After a little the other people straightened up, but her head remained bowed for some time, and mine with hers, though it was not the length of her prayer that kept her there. But I hope God saw her eyes when she raised up.

My occasional crossings of the Brooklyn Bridge are not enough for Alice Kibbe. She goes over there alone on all manner of shopping expeditions. A few days after that July 4 which began so bravely and ended so badly she told me one morning she meant to make a buying trip to Manhattan that day. "What for?" I asked, thinking I could get what she needed and so save her a tiresome journey. "A spool of thread," she answered honestly. I argued eloquently and long that Brooklyn's Fulton Street could supply any spool of thread that could be described with words or a sample, and that I yearned for an excuse to take two hours off for lunch. She looked hard at me and gave me the gayest smile she could muster, shaking her head three times slowly. My own head is a pine-knot, I often think.

But however much my white-faced partner—now so very white, with eyes so big in their gray rings—however much she may patrol the streets of Manhattan scrutinizing the faces of men and peering through the plate-glass windows of banks, neither

the *Old Lame Duck* nor I, another old lame duck, can complain of neglect. It is spotless; and as for me, she walks with me to the car-track every morning and welcomes me there again at night, and because of her this is still home.

Supplementing her search is the work of Dr. Juvenny, prince of friends. With the delicacy that one would expect in him, he does not come to the *Old Lame Duck* these days; but he telephones me at the office, asking for news, saying that the police have had no word of a person of Mr. Tibby's description, and advising me when I ask for counsel.

Mr. Wimpfheimer often tears himself from the Year One to inquire about the lost man, but he can give us no help, much as it grieves him not to be able to set his ferrets after Mr. Tibby. Mr. Wimpfheimer is well-nigh lost himself, among the seven hills of Rome and the golden days of Augustus.

Supplementary also to Alice Kibbe's search is of course the quiet detective work of Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle, whose light I see still burning down there, where she no doubt plows through the fine print of yesterday's "Herald," especially that of the "personals." Before July had gone she had persuaded us to insert an advertisement in that romantic column, an advertisement which she wrote and I left at a branch office of that paper, by request

of Alice Kibbe, who wanted to please Mrs. Bullwinkle.

> Mr. Walter Labitibi will hear something to his advantage if he will communicate with E.W., Herald, Brooklyn.

So Mrs. Bullwinkle wrote. Alice was not sure that it would be to Mr. Tibby's advantage, so she declared very gravely; but Mrs. Bullwinkle waved aside her objection, saying that such advertisements always have "advantage" in them, and arguing enthusiastically that there was a chance that he might have found in the clothes he wore some piece of writing having Labitibi on it, which would lead him to suspect that that had been his name during a period of which he must be curious.

Though nothing came of the advertisement, this is a mystery which engages Mrs. Bullwinkle's constant attention and challenges her extremely unusual abilities. Like the very greatest of romantic detectives, she is never discouraged and has faith that she will solve it yet sitting in a comfortable chair under the lamp.

Alice Kibbe had little hope that there was any helpful writing in the clothes that Mr. Tibby wore away. During that time of the lessons in remembrance she had written a letter which he had promised to keep in that most important pocket a

man has—his inside coat pocket. I knew what was in that letter because I copied it, she pointing out that if it were in a woman's handwriting, and if he should have a wife, and if she should somehow see the letter—well, anyway, that it would be better signed by me and written in my best stub-pen style.

But that July 4, when we got back home, she went at once to his state-room, and coming later into the dining-room laid on the table by me a little pile of things that had come out of a man's pockets. The letter, dog-eared and gray from devoted carrying about every day, was in the pile.

She walked to the southern window and stood silently looking out. It was clear what had happened: we had been in such a hurry to get away on our holiday early that July morning, each of us sportively hounding the others to make haste and not hold the party, that in changing from his every-day blue serge he had transferred only his knife, watch, and money.

The envelop had not been sealed, and I took out the letter, read it once more, and put it away in my own inside pocket, to get it out of Alice Kibbe's sight.

Dear Mr. Labitibi [it says], you are a man who once lost track of himself and lived for a while with some queer people on a tidal creek in South Brooklyn. Though it has no name, we call it Wullie's Creek be-

cause of a dear old soul here you would like to meet again, I think.

Maybe you will want to know something of that time you spent among us; and we should like to hear something of you, because we were your friends here and we thought a great deal of you. That is why this letter is written. If you will address a note to Mr. Easley Wheatley, in care of Mr. Marcus Wimpfheimer, Marine Building, Third Avenue, Brooklyn, you can come into touch with us again.

Mr. Labitibi is of course not your name. We gave you that name, then we shortened it to Mr. Tibby, and after a while we added to it Walter. While you were with us here you remembered no names of your other past, except a Mrs. McWhortle and she was in a dream, and now that in all likelihood you have gone back to that other past you will no doubt have forgotten us every one. But I will write down some of our names. Perhaps you will be curious to see if they call up any memories in your mind now.

Mr. William Farquharson, whom we call Wullie. Do you remember how tall and round-shouldered and strong he is? His dark-brown hair, with red glints in it, falls down over his coat collar. He wears a wide-brimmed black felt hat, always pulled well down over his eyes, so that under it and under his thick bushy brown eyebrows they look like lights far back in a dark cave. Does Wullie mean anything to you, Mr. Tibby, Wullie and his bugle and his dear worrisome stars?

Then there is Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle. She is very old, but you must not tell her I said so if you ever see her. Very old and very small and very quick about stepping along; a worshiper of blood, a student of mystery and romance, a woman who has no objection to traveling. Do you remember her snow-white eyebrows, and Greymoor-by-the-Sea, and her terrapin Time?

There is also the dump, and the salvagers on it: old Mrs. Grackle with her eyes almost closed all the time and her under lip poked out as if she were angry, but she isn't angry ever, and she is a darling; and Jeb Stuart and the *Old Lame Duck,* do you remember them, Mr. Tibby? Dr. Juvenny, who limps and walks with a stick and smiles crookedly because of a bullet wound in his cheek, and who was so very helpful to you—and to everybody else, too, that he can be; and Mr. Marcus Wimpfheimer, scholar, patriot, fumigator, and exterminator—do they sound anything in your memory now, I wonder?

There were three partners aboard the *Old Lame Duck.* There were only two when you came; now there are only two again. One of them was a small old man—he says he's old but he isn't, very—with wide shoulders, a snub-nose, white crinkly hair always cropped close, and a right leg that limps a little. Another was yourself. Do you remember the third, Mr. Tibby? Think of Willetts Hassock, Dead Horse Inlet, and Hog Point Creek.

You should know, Mr. Tibby, that your acquaint-

ances of that lost time in your life have no claims whatsoever upon you. While you were here with us you did nothing that you need now fear or be ashamed of. We shall all be glad to see you again at any time; we shall for a fact.

And the letter was sincerely signed by me. How tenderly cautious and protective that Alice Kibbe had been; how obediently had he carried the letter about in his pocket, until once, in a hurry, he hadn't; perhaps thinking that as he would be with us all day he couldn't possibly need it.

Now she is coming back from her patrolling of the old paths. I have heard Wullie bugling twice out to the north, and the second time he was nearer the *Old Lame Duck*. The night is dark; I am glad he is with her. Mrs. Bullwinkle's light is out at last. Now mine here in the pilot-house must go out too. I must hurry. Saloon A must be cheerful with light and a warm fire when she comes home. Weather forecast for to-morrow: cloudy and cold. Latitude and longitude: identically the same as that of the Slough of Despond.

## *CHAPTER XVIII*

### *—Clue for the Bullwinkle*

Four times has Mrs. Bullwinkle's imperturbable little terrapin dug himself into his muddy winter quarters and dug himself out again since that July day when one of the three partners dropped, like a star of Wullie's bright flock, below the horizon and out of sight. They always come back, but Mr. Tibby has not come back.

The long gray line of ashes has pushed on southward as far as it was intended it should go, so that Mrs. Bullwinkle and Wullie, common non-resident salvagers now, must go away each day to new diggings in another part of Brooklyn; for they declare they will not move their habitations. Greymoor-by-the-Sea is to remain, and Wullie's unnamed shack, both of which time and the winds of winter have shoved at until they lean slanting toward the south and east.

This dark April Monday has been full of slow soggy rain, like a December soaker; and Mrs. Grackle's washing of the *Old Lame Duck's* clothes still hangs wet upon the line running from a corner of the weather-grayed craft to a post near the woodpile, and will hang there through the night. Perhaps

the wind will change, the rain go away, and they will be dry by morning. So Mr. Wheatley says, looking out at the clouds after dinner. But still the water drips without ceasing from the hurricane-deck of the lonesome ship, the moon is wet and dim, and the lights from the three habitations swim out into the night and soon falter and droop and drown.

Inside the *Old Lame Duck* Saloon A has no burning lamp on the table but is faintly illuminated through a small yellow square above, from the pilot-house, where Mr. Wheatley keeps his vigil yet, sometimes staring out into the baffling sea of air, now scratching with a stub-pen in a ledger-like old book, now sitting still, drumming the table absently with the fingers of his right hand, his left curled up in his lap, his neck seeming so piteously small and stringy as he bows his head under the light, his body slumped low in his chair.

The first state-room to the right is Alice Kibbe's, but it is lightless, and she is not in it; perhaps the light down there at the end of the passage in Saloon B will show her. This state-room to the left was Mr. Tibby's. When? Alice Kibbe would say a thousand years or so ago, and say it with a smile that would pierce you. No lamp here, either, but there is light enough returning from that outside to see that the clothes on the bed are folded back for some one who may come to-night.

Maybe we ought not to enter this door of Saloon B; but it is open and now we are inside it, and here is only an enormous fat gray cat asleep on the cushioned window-seat and a huge stove with many cracks in it and one wooden leg, which is new, and a woman in a rocking-chair by the table.

Yes, this *is* Alice Kibbe. Don't you remember that sturdy chin, those long quick fingers that move so surely and so lightly with her sewing, and the bend of her smooth white neck that Mr. Tibby used to look at so much, and that large generous mouth, the lips of which are pressed tightly together, perhaps because she is concentrating on the work in her hands, a little pucker between her eyebrows, perhaps because the lamp is not turned high enough? Yes, indeed, this is Alice Kibbe, and now that she is laughing at Jeb Stuart for kicking and whimpering in his dream you hear her voice, coming from deep in her throat and edged with those almost inaudible little high notes that Mr. Tibby once thought he could never forget. This is Alice Kibbe; it is for a fact. Four years, four such years!

And Jeb Stuart, having passed safely through his dream, is once more quiet; she is sewing again, and the kettle on the stove sings on; and outside the water drips and drips and drips down upon the deck of the *Old Lame Duck,* and the little waves in the creek that are but echoes of a surging tide in the

Atlantic lap against the black bottom of the ancient scow, and time sweeps by.

After a while Alice Kibbe's hands fall into her lap; she loosens the muscles of her body; and letting her head lean back against the chair, she closes her eyes, as if she were very tired. And while she lies thus there is a dulled pattering of rubbered steps out on the deck, the door is flung open, and Mrs. Bullwinkle, cloaked but bareheaded, rushes inside, brandishing a flapping section of a newspaper. She is so excited that she is here making a semipublic appearance in her spectacles.

"I've found him, my dear; I've found him at last." Mrs. Bullwinkle's voice is high and shrill, and she stands with her puckered little mouth open, as was her habit after making a dramatic announcement.

"Do be quiet, Mrs. Bullwinkle. Found who?" Alice Kibbe is standing up, amusement at the corners of her lips but her left hand fluttering at her throat.

"Mr. Tibby!"

"Don't, Mrs. Bullwinkle; *please!*"

"Yes, but it *is,* I tell you. There's an ad here in the 'Herald's' 'Help Wanted—Female' columns that no one, I'm sure, except Mr. Tibby ever in this world wrote. Where is Mr. Wheatley? Call him down from the pilot-houe and let him see if he doesn't think so. You read it, my dear, while I go call him."

And Alice Kibbe reads:

> Wanted a cook. If there is anywhere in New York a person who can cook simple food simply and perfectly, I will pay her, or him, a large salary for a little work. I want no pies, pastries, gravies, sauces, or any greasy, gummy, messy complicated concoctions whatsoever. There will be one person to cook for, and there will be no company. Luncheon and dinner only are required. I do my own breakfast, but the cook will clean up after me. Luncheon and dinner will be ready at the same times every day, and the food will come freshly cooked from the kitchen at these times. The cook will be clean and look it, and if he or she is not honest I shall soon know it. I want no silly references or cards from the infernal agencies; leave them at home. The cook will buy the food, charging it to my account. The cook will be able to look at a lamb chop in a butcher shop and tell in advance whether it will taste like a lamb chop or like something that has been soaked over-night in insecticide. The chop will be cooked so that it tastes like neither dried wood nor warm blood. This will indicate what I mean to anybody that isn't a fool. The cook will not have to worry about what to cook, or consult so-called helpful variety experts in books, magazines, and newspapers; I will decide what to cook the day before. In case dismissal is necessary there will be no argument; if the envelop containing the week's wages is blue the cook will say nothing and come no more. This is a position requiring nothing on earth except ordinary sense, ordinary knowledge of cooking, and extraordinary patience. But it is not a position for an invalid, an idiot, a know-it-all, a talking-machine, a cheat, or a sloppy draggle-tail. Apply in person Tuesday, 6 P.M., at——

When Mrs. Bullwinkle rushes in dragging Mr. Wheatley by the hand, Alice Kibbe is scrutinizing the Manhattan address with round eyes. Now she leans back and luxuriates in the best laugh she has had in months.

"Isn't he a caution?" says the detective admiringly. "Those want-ads cost like the mischief, I can tell you; he must have spent some money on that one. I'd like to shake him, with his lamb chops and one stuff and another. Read it, Mr. Wheatley, read it, and then say if that isn't Mr. Tibby or his twin brother. You people have pooh-poohed me and my ideas, but I'll show you this time. I'll apply for that position to-morrow, *in* person, at 6 P.M., and I'll come back and tell you who the man is. Ha, Mr. Tibby, I'm on your trail now, sir."

"Will you go disguised as a cook, Mrs. Bullwinkle?" Mr. Wheatley's face is very serious.

"Laugh now, laugh all you like; but to-morrow night you'll listen to what I say."

"Yes, we shall, Mrs. Bullwinkle. Don't pay any attention to daddy. I've a great mind to go with you, I have for a fact, just for the fun of it."

And the next day it is indeed Alice Kibbe, now a little excited herself, though she tries to conceal her agitation, who must cross the river if this clue is to be investigated; for the aged detective lies groaning in the clutches of lumbago.

"Go, my dear," Mrs. Bullwinkle gasps from her bed, "go and have a look anyway. Mrs. Grackle will be here to do the ironing, and she can stay on and cook Mr. Wheatley's dinner and tell him where you are. I'd give a pretty to go myself. I always miss everything. I'm getting a little old, I suppose; a wet day floors me half the time. Oh, my back! But stop in when you return. I'll be awake if it's midnight. Do go, my dear, if only to please me."

Overnight the April weather has changed. The sun is out, the earth is dry, the air is balmy, and small riffled plumes of fluffy white float slowly in the peaceful sky.

Forty-fourth Street! It is an old home street to Alice Kibbe, though hers was away over by the East River and this number is, she estimates, west of Fifth Avenue a few doors, and on the south side because it is an even number. Leaving the Third Avenue elevated at Forty-second Street, and having half an hour to spare, she prowls around the neighborhood where once she cooked a dinner to celebrate a job and then gave up the job. Now she is to apply for another, not seriously, but to please an old woman who is sick.

At a quarter to six she is striding westward, a tall figure in dark-blue serge and wearing a stiff sailor-hat which so becomes her; and as she approaches Fifth Avenue she hears above the hum and clatter of

traffic a thick busy buzzing, and looking across the avenue she sees a great crowd gathered in front of a building a little distance down in Forty-fourth Street.

Getting across Fifth Avenue, she adds herself to the constantly increasing crowd of several hundred women and perhaps a dozen men, of all colors and conditions, converging upon a closed door, behind which a uniformed negro boy stands rolling his eyes; and above the heads of the waiting throng she sees that the number on the fan-light of the door is that which was in that mad advertisement. Two policemen, callously patient, are shepherding the standing staring mob, keeping open narrow lanes on both sidewalks and out in the street.

They finally meet near Alice Kibbe, who leans against a building on the north side of the street opposite the closed door. "Who are these nuts, Ed?" asks one of the policemen. "I've been in to see the dinge in the uniform," replies the other, "and he reports that a lunatic named Badeneau advertised for a cook to apply here at six o'clock. Counting out rubber-necks, we must have here a choice lot of a hundred and fifty cooks. That must have been an advertisement and a half, Art. Look at 'em—Chinks, Japs, wops, harps, dinges, male and female, old and young and middle-aged. Gee, I'd hate to be this guy Badeneau. I phoned the captain, and he

said let 'em alone until a few minutes after six; we'll give 'em a fair chance to get that job. It must be a *peach* of a job."

And hearing a kind of hissing noise behind her, Alice Kibbe turns and looks into the black eyes of Mr. Tibby. He shifts his furious gaze to the waiting, jostling, buzzing, increasingly impatient mob, which, having heard that his apartment is on the fourth floor, keeps looking up at the windows there as if expecting him to show himself above them at one of the imitation bay-windows and make a speech about cooking.

Mr. Tibby is grinding his teeth, the bunched muscles at the back of his jaws standing out on his thin bilious-brown cheeks. The light-gray suit and the gray felt hat that he wears, inadvisedly, Alice Kibbe notes, makes him look all the more bilious.

"Mr. Tibby!" She barely breathes the name, her left hand at her throat. But he has rushed over to one of the policemen and is talking with much raising of clenched hands above his head; and now both uniforms are busy around the edges of the army of cooks, pushing at them and telling them something Alice Kibbe can't distinguish; but in a moment a policeman reaches her neighborhood, and she hears him saying over and over again, "Go on—the job's already filled—nothin' doing here—beat it."

And the cooks, their indignation voicing itself in

a hoarse buzzing that rises higher the farther away they move from the blue uniforms, hurry out of Forty-fourth Street, the rubber-necks going with them; and within ten minutes the sidewalks and street are clear, traffic flows freely on, and Alice Kibbe is walking slowly up Fifth Avenue, her head down, biting her lip.

Well, she knows his real name now and his address. Isn't that enough; isn't it time to go home? And then suddenly lifting her head, as one who has settled a problem, she strides back down Fifth Avenue, turns into Forty-fourth Street, enters the recently besieged doorway, and approaches the hall-boy at the infinitesimal switchboard.

"Mr. Badeneau, please." There is determination in her eye.

"Yassum, but you ain't lookin' for no—"

"Never mind; tell Mr. Badeneau I'm here."

"Yassum, yassum; 'scuse *me.*"

Talking into the receiver, he rolls his eyes up at her. "Whut name, Mr. Badeneau say?"

"Alice Kibbe."

"Yassum." And then he points to the elevator door behind him; and in a moment the tiny dusty-smelling iron cage is creaking upward. There are only four floors to go, but to Alice Kibbe the trip seems hours long. Now she stands before a door in a dusky hall, the elevator has gone down, and her

left hand keeps fluttering about the bell-button and yet not pressing it. And then it does press the black button. In this place she cannot feel the presence of women, and she is wondering.

After a while—the interval has been a blur to her—she is sitting in a deep chair in a large living-room, Mr. Tibby standing by a window, bare-headed, smoking a cigarette, nervously knocking off the ashes after each puff, staring down into the street. Why doesn't he come close to her and ask her what she wants? He isn't taking care of himself now. He is jumpy again, and his eyes are not clear, and his cheeks are green from biliousness, his black hair going gray around the edges. No, Alice Kibbe tells herself, he isn't taking care of himself, and no one else is either. Her arms would like to shake him, and then to rock him tenderly.

"Alice Kibbe—shall I say 'Miss' or 'Mistress'?" He is talking at her from the window.

"Don't say either."

"What is it, Alice Kibbe?"

"You wanted a cook. You advertised for one. Then you fell into a tantrum an' told a fib. You made the two policemen say the place had been filled."

He walked close to her and stood looking down into her raised eyes. "How did you know? Did you—did you want it, Alice Kibbe?"

"I came to ask for it."

"When will you begin?"

"Now."

"Why, there's nothin' in the place to cook, Alice Kibbe. I've been eatin' in restaurants for the last three months; they'll kill me yet. But let me show you around, an' to-morrow you can begin, if you will. I'll give you a key. Come—I'll tell you all about the job, Alice Kibbe, an' show you the place."

She floats about in these four rooms, hearing no word whatsoever about them or about the job, though now and then, answering a question, she nods her head up and down three times and says, "It is for a fact"; whereupon he glances sharply at her and goes on. The place and all his talk make no definite impression on her mind, where there is a great singing, and wherein she is saying, "Mr. Tibby, Mr. Tibby; no wife here; he needs me, he needs me; Walter, don't you remember—oh, don't you remember?"

And so at last she is standing at the door ready to go.

"You haven't had any dinner, have you?" she asks. "Don't forget it."

"You're a witch, Alice Kibbe; you know all my weaknesses before you begin. How did you—"

"Well, I haven't had any either."

"Would you eat with me, Alice Kibbe? It's just

across the avenue, the restaurant is. Maybe you can tell me what I ought to eat. Will you do it, Alice Kibbe? Are you brave enough for that? I'm lonesome an' want to talk to you."

"Would you eat dinner with your cook, then?"

"I'll eat dinner with Alice Kibbe. I do like your name. It sounds as if I had known it a long time ago. Did I, Alice Kibbe?"

"Well, all right, then, if you like my name, I'll eat dinner with you, provided—an' pay attention, please, to the proviso—provided you'll walk with me down Fifth Avenue all the way to Fourteenth Street, where I'll leave you, an' then promise to walk back here, not takin' any cab or car an' walkin' very fast. Are *you* brave enough for *that?*"

"I promise, Alice Kibbe. I don't understand what you're gettin' at; but whatever it is, it's all right, I believe. Yes, I promise."

Down in the street, Walter by her side, she sees the evening star leap above the Grand Central Station, and Forty-fourth is the sweetest street that ever she has walked; her first home over yonder at the eastern end of it by the river of whistles—and how she did love that one-room home!—and here at last, on this very same Forty-fourth Street, her runaway again.

She is bowing her head and saying to herself, "It's just splendid; it is for a fact."

"Why do you nod your head that way, Alice Kibbe?"

"I was only sayin' it was a beautiful day, an' you can feel in the air new green grass an' the first fuzzy buds that have come to the tips of the trees."

In Delmonico's, then already so old and firmly established and sure of itself, now disappeared utterly from the face of the earth, Mr. Tibby hands her the menu-card. "You order, Alice Kibbe, an' by the way you order I'll know if you're the cook that God sent."

"I'll order without the card, an' then you'll know even better."

Having ordered without the card a dinner she well knows he will like, and, more important, not regret later, she pushes with her foot a little cushion covered with red carpeting out from under the table, telling the waiter to take it away. "Our legs are long enough without that."

"Do you know a very special name for a little cushion like that, Alice Kibbe?"

"Yes, *I* do; but you don't."

"Yes, I do; it's a hassock." And he leans over the table looking triumphantly at her, and she feels that his shoulders want to swagger.

"You're fine, you are that." And her hands would like to pat his head.

"Where do you live, Alice Kibbe?"

"Over in Brooklyn, far to the south, on a tidal creek named Wullie's, in a boat-house we call the *Old Lame Duck.*" And in her mind, while her tongue says these names slowly, she is crying, "Don't you remember, Walter, don't you remember?" And he is staring down at his plate.

Afterward, charging down Fifth Avenue, walking as one, their feet have wings. Now and then, forgetting herself, she seizes his arm to halt him in front of show-windows with flowers in them, or magic slippers and stockings to match, or new spring hats that queens could wear, or frocks that the fairies have made they are so perfect. So she describes them to herself, here, with Walter by her side and the air fiery sweet with a new time.

Night has come, and Wullie must surely have blown terribly hard at his children, for the April sky is fast blooming with gold and green and red. Two partners of long easy silences these two have always been, and to-night they need few words. He strides on, his shoulders squared back, his eyes straight ahead, catching desperately at something tantalizing in his mind that forever eludes him; and she strides on in perfect step, her sturdy chin uplifted, her eyes shining, something in her mind singing and singing like a bird just come up from the South.

At Fourteenth Street she stops, halting suddenly

like a soldier. "Now, sir, you must go back," she says, "an' I must get home. My partner will be uneasy about me."

"Your partner, Alice Kibbe?"

"My father."

"Only two partners, Alice Kibbe?"

"Once there were three." And her voice falls, and she looks away.

"I'm sorry, Alice Kibbe; I didn't know."

"But now, sir, you remember you promised to walk all the way back, an' walk fast, with your shoulders up like a military man. I will stand an' watch you start, an' I will clap my hands if you do it as you used—as you ought. Right about face! Forward, march!"

"No, no, Alice Kibbe; not yet. Are you really comin' to-morrow mornin'?"

"Why, yes; I said so."

"But you won't. You never will. I'll wake up in a minute."

"Forward!"

And as he marchcs away, Alice Kibbe stands and watches him, and claps her hands, and waves at him when he turns to look back, and after a while she goes home, goes flying home.

*CHAPTER XIX*

*—Alice Mines a Memory*

Wind S E, blowing gently, weather as perfect as ever mortal felt. Am reminded of that other June when Alice Kibbe and I retreated from the doubting landlord and landed here on the *Old Lame Duck.*

Excited doings once more for the crew and passengers of this rampageous old dry-land liner, who has pulled her nose out of the Slough of Despond and is cruising with all sails set along the thrilling Archipelago of Forgetfulness, somewhere near—oh, surely near—the Isles of Delight, if only we can come upon them. But we may miss them.

Excited? Mrs. Bullwinkle is so excited she can scarcely attend to her duties on the new dump. She has exalted herself as prophet, seer, sibyl, and man-catcher; and now whenever she is delivered of any drifting notion she speaks as one pronouncing judgment final, infallible, absolute. "It is so—I have spoken." Wullie used to have his annual laugh at some time during each year at her involuntary instigation; now the bearded old giant is like to laugh himself to death.

Excited? Alice Kibbe floats for a while up among the bright universes, her voice in tune with theirs, and then she is a worm of gloom wriggling along the earth of a dark night. Never have I seen my tall steady partner in such a state.

She comes in at night about 9:30, and usually she is still reporting to me at eleven. She is mining and sapping under Mr. Tibby's memory, her reports being upon the evidences of her success or failure. Every word he speaks, every tone of his voice, these she must interpret and ask me what I think of her interpretation. No, not every word and tone—I am an old blanket-stretcher—but let us say half of them.

The night of the third day of her new adventure she came home in despair. She sat below in Saloon A, not saying anything, but looking as if the world were lost beyond all hope.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Did he make you eat in the kitchen?"

"Shucks, I'm not afraid of anything like that. He'll do what I say about such things. I sat at the table with him, of course; and he was glad of it. He is lonesome, dreadfully lonesome, Cap."

"Well, what is wrong then? Do you think he'll hand you the blue envelop next Saturday night?"

"Oh, don't, daddy, *please;* I'm so worried. Tonight, sittin' over there at the table, I let him have

Dead Horse Inlet an' Hog Point Creek in one broadside, as you would say, an' so far as I could see they didn't touch him. He just sat lookin' at me as if I hadn't said anything at all, an' as if his mind were seventeen million miles away."

After all, why should she be so eager to restore those eleven months to him? He is found again, and in addition a certain fearsome doubt about him has been removed. Isn't that enough? No, it is not enough. Everything about Alice Kibbe Mr. Tibby knew; Mr. Badeneau would have to be told. And perhaps—no, surely—there is something back there in those lost months which she knows intuitively can never grow again quite so perfectly. It was for her, and I verily believe for him, the first time. There is but one first time.

Back there she is at home and happy. "Don't you remember, Walter, don't you remember?" In my mind I can hear her saying it over and over again. Things were woven there, words were spoken then, secret treasure buried under the hill of their great yesterday, that are precious to Alice Kibbe, doubly so if she can take him back to them.

I say to her in my mind, "Suppose you gain Mr. Tibby, dump worker and Eighth Avenue bookkeeper, and lose Mr. Badeneau, vice-president of the Creole Trust Company?" No, I do not say that to her, but if I did I fancy she would scrunch up

both her eyes in that comical approximate wink of hers and whisper in my ear, "I haven't got Mr. Badeneau, sir; an', besides, I like Mr. Tibby better." Only he would be Walter to her.

And perhaps she wouldn't, now, scrunch up her eyes at me. In her high moments she is the very Alice Kibbe that was with me over yonder in Forty-fourth Street and that Mr. Tibby later knew. In spirit, at such times, she is not older by a second than when we two retreated down through Prospect Park, and she so gay and light of heart in the face of our black-looking future. But most of the time now—well, four years are four years, and as they go by they add something, but they dim something also. All the Alice Kibbes that have been and are or may be are perfect of their kind to me; and this woman of to-day, a trifle graver than the girl of yesterday, a little more veiled with seriousness, rising a little less quickly to a dare and a jest, I would not change if I could. Lord save us, I should like to know her when she is thirty, and forty, and sixty.

But she wants to take Mr. Tibby back to those eleven lost months, for reasons good and sufficient to her and so to me. Take him back, partner, if you can; and if I can help, you have but to give me my orders and say, "Forward!"

Mrs. Grackle and the *Old Lame Duck* and me! But maybe Wullie would live here with me; his

leaning shanty will blow down on him some night, and then what will the poor stars do, running wild across the sky? Well, let the years come on; there can't be many that I shall need to meet. I may have to retreat, but the Army of the Left hopes that it will be able to retreat in good order. Anyway, I should surely see her once a week.

Forecast for to-morrow: fair and warm. But the night is cold to me; old bones, cold bones. Memo—and I shall come more nearly remembering it if I write it down—I must see Dr. Juvenny and have him give me a thorough overhauling. I am getting to be such a trembly dizzy skipper these days that this sly old dry-land liner will get away from me some dark night and go sashaying over to Coney Island on some mad prank or other. But see the doc at his office; don't have him here, or Alice Kibbe may come in and be worried about you. A God's plenty of worry already lies upon her.

I must go down and get to bed. Latitude and longitude: the same, for the moment.

## *CHAPTER XX*

### *—"Old Lame Duck" Rampages*

Wind? Great Cæsar's ghost, I don't know how the wind is to-night. For to-morrow is Alice Kibbe's strategic birthday party, and a hurricane rages here on Wullie's Creek if not in the upper elements.

It is close to midnight, but down there I see Mrs. Bullwinkle's light burning yet, so I take it she is canvassing her clothes. Which shall it be, which shall it be?—and I am reminded of that poem in McGuffey's reader—the brown crêpe de Chine or the figured foulard? Three times this night I have heard her little shoes, with their sharp-pointed toes curled up in front, pattering on the deck of the *Old Lame Duck* when she came to consult Alice Kibbe, whom she at last ranks as one of blood, in these romantic circumstances, being now on Fifth Avenue and everything.

Wullie's light over there beyond hers burns a yellow square. Who shall say what alarums and trepidations are shaking the old fellow's heart at the thought of dressing up and going across the river into the very center of elegant luxury and magnipotent pomp? For Mrs. Bullwinkle has not failed to

pursue him with explicit directions and frightful warnings. She is in terror lest he discredit the guests from the *Old Lame Duck* and Greymoor-by-the-Sea.

Twice in three days he has come in to tell Alice Kibbe that he can't possibly be there, for reasons which she listens to patiently and then gently removes; she wins him every time.

And she herself, down there in Saloon B, was doing something or other to her hair, twenty-four hours ahead of time, when I came up here to play at being a captain again. She decided what she was going to wear at the time that she decided on the party, a week ago. It is to be a summer dress, but of that light soft-gray color which was in the dress she wore on that Christmas eve when we had the tree and Mrs. Bertha If came near being hung upon it as a gift to Mr. Tibby. He was enthusiastic about that gray dress; and so now the color of the new one, the style of her party hair, her stockings, her slippers, all these and everything else relating to the birthday dinner are considered in her strategy.

For she is utterly disheartened about the lost man. She says he seems to be no nearer to Mr. Tibby than the first day she saw him there in Forty-fourth Street glaring at the hundred and fifty cooks he had summoned from the city's vasty deeps. He is amiable and eager, seems to be ever feeling for something in

his memory, puts up with no end of impudence from her, she says; but in his eyes she sees that he is still only Mr. Badeneau and not at all Mr. Tibby; or only vaguely Mr. Tibby, for I am sure, from the reported evidence, that there is something of him, perhaps more than he lets her see, in Mr. Badeneau, my tall partner being in a spell of gloom at the moment. She wants him to be both at once, but if one of them must be lost she would rather keep Mr. Tibby.

She evades many searching personal questions that Mr. Badeneau asks her. When he becomes Mr. Tibby, if he ever does, he will not, she points out, need to ask them. In order to open his memory she drags before him casually and incidentally, over and over again, Willetts Hassock, Dead Horse Inlet, Hog Point Creek, the *Old Lame Duck,* everything and everybody hereabouts, and all, she groans, to no avail.

She has, she says, cooked for him tender young mustard-greens, boiled with bacon and to be eaten with corn-bread; she has done her finest with Louisiana gumbo; she has served bouillabaisse, buttered okra, and many another dish that he once liked so well here and probably has not been getting elsewhere—couldn't get elsewhere quite the same even if he knew what to ask for. But even this mighty appeal to the masculine stomach has not touched him.

Wherefore this strategic party. She will not be twenty-four until October, but with crafty cunning she is timing the party for July 4, because of that other July 4 when he walked away; and what is a snow-white lie upon the record of Alice Kibbe, though she is terribly worried about it? Except herself Mr. Badeneau hasn't seen any of us here. To-morrow he is to see us all, and all at once, including Dr. Juvenny and Mr. Wimpfheimer. I tell her that she is planning to use us as a therapeutic shock, but she vows that isn't it at all, whatever "it" means.

Alice Kibbe reports that the event was easy to arrange. She says she mentioned that she was going to have the birthday party, that all her friends were going to attend, that his dining-room was much larger than hers at home—which I doubt, but let that go—and that he leaped into the trap with both feet, giving his consent only if he be permitted to be present also. I suspect it was not as simple as all that. I suspect that she reported to me merely the climax of no end of schemings and maneuverings.

Well, there it is, anyway. To-morrow the mine is to be exploded, after weeks of tunneling. So far as she can see, it is Alice Kibbe's final dramatic effort. After that there will be nothing ahead except siege; long, slow, heartbreaking siege. Therefore, may the sight of Mrs. Felicia Bullwinkle, in foulard or crêpe de Chine, of Mr. Marcus Wimpfheimer, Mr. Wil-

liam Farquharson, Mr. Easley Wheatley, Mrs. Amanda Grackle, and Dr. Bob Juvenny so stagger and shatter and stimulate Mr. Badeneau that he will instantly reach back and gather up those lost eleven months, becoming at once that paragon of perfection, Mr. Badeneau and Mr. Tibby combined.

But, there, now, this is not the spirit in which to write of Alice Kibbe's party, even in a secret old log-book that has become merely a sort of exhaust-pipe for aged vaporings. This is serious business for my tall partner, and so serious business for me. Perhaps I am trying to cover up from myself, with lightness, the very gravity of it. If her strategic party is a failure she will be deeply hurt; if it is a success—well, never mind that.

I hope I shall be feeling better to-morrow than I am to-night. I have not told her of that fall I had a month ago in Mr. Wimpfheimer's office; she has worries enough. And now to bed, and careful going down that ladder. I tumbled off it in the dark the other night, but luckily she did not hear me. What a fumbling old fool I'm getting to be, to be sure! I really must not postpone seeing Dr. Juvenny again. But what's the use? As good as he is, he can't put a young heart into an old body. Down in the creek I hear the tide going out, riffling among the reeds and sucking and swirling at the hollow places. Now I must go. I am tired.

## *"Old Lame Duck" Rampages*

Forecast for to-morrow: I do not know, and I hesitate to guess, but I pray for something beautiful for Alice Kibbe's party. Latitude and longitude? None whatever. The *Old Lame Duck* is out upon the high seas, with the wheel lashed and all sails set, with the lights doused, bucking like a bronco and outrunning any latitude and longitude that ever was.

I think I'll be all right by morning.

## *CHAPTER XXI*

### *—Retreat, in Good Order*

THIS is the day; a beautiful July 4, the sun clear and the air cool, unusually cool for July. Poor Wullie, rising at dawn, has not, as is his habit, gone back to bed for a final nap. Mr. Wheatley comes to breakfast, stopping now and then in the passage from Saloon A to Saloon B to steady himself with hands against the walls; comes to breakfast with the light of gaiety in his eyes, snapping his fingers with a valiant exhibition of high spirits as he enters the door of the dining-room.

"Good mornin', partner, an' luck to you this day. Important things have happened on July 4, and will happen again. What have you done to your hair? You're bewitchin', Alice Kibbe, an' that's a fact."

And Alice Kibbe, a girl again, gives him that double wink of hers, stooping a little to put her redoubtable left arm around his shoulder as he moves from the door to the table.

Mrs. Bullwinkle dashes in to report her suspicion that Wullie is planning to take his old brass bugle with him, slung around his shoulder on that

grimy string; and he must *not* do it, must he, Alice Kibbe? The bugle is always bright, Mrs. Bullwinkle says, though now he has polished it until it blazes; but what does that matter? Tell him to leave it at home, my dear. No, indeed, Mrs. Bullwinkle, Wullie hall have his bugle. He is not himself without it. Besides, whatever would he do apart from it at sundown and at midnight, for he will probably be over yonder at both those times.

At ten o'clock Alice Kibbe is ready to depart. Radiant. Irresistible. A tall figure in soft gray with touches of soft blue about it. A great white vase with a light inside it. So thinks the senior partner, standing about to help her if he can, his eyes full of pride, his eyes full of much more than that.

Alice Kibbe poises for the flight, and waiting to fly with her is the priceless, silent, ambidextrous Mrs. Grackle, wearing so many newly starched clothes that merely walking she sounds like a wind in a field of dry corn.

Alice Kibbe's final word to Mr. Wheatley is: not to forget to lock up the *Old Lame Duck;* not to forget to feed Jeb Stuart at noon and to leave out some scraps of meat for Mrs. Bullwinkle's Time; not to forget to change his clothes ("the new ones are all ready in Saloon A, the buttons changed in the shirt an' everything"); not to let Mrs. Bullwinkle frighten Wullie into leaving his bugle behind; not

to worry; to start over at six ("for the dinner is to be at eight, remember, an' you'll need two hours for the trip, to make sure, daddy"); to bring Wullie and Mrs. Bullwinkle with him; to take it easy and have a good time all day reading and smoking his pipe ("your lunch is all set there on the table, sir, so you'll need only to make yourself a pot of coffee"); not to do around too much and get tired ("for I'm bankin' on you, Cap, to cheer us up tonight, an' we may need it, the Lord knows"); *and* not to worry about his bow-tie because she will knot it rightly when he comes over to the dinner. Good-by, good-by! And her arms are around him, and her great gray eyes are wet, and you would think one of them was about to go on a very long journey indeed.

And now she is gone, and he stands on the forward deck of the *Old Lame Duck* and watches her walk over to the track. A car comes, she waves at him, away over yonder, a white handkerchief, and he goes slowly into Saloon A and drops on the bed. Getting up presently, he tries a pipe of tobacco, sitting by the table; but it tastes nasty in his mouth, and laying the pipe against the base of the lamp he creeps back to bed. He will rest, he will save everything in him for Alice Kibbe's strategic party.

Wullie and Mrs. Bullwinkle, busy with their own affairs, do not visit him, and he is glad they don't.

At noon he will have his lunch; at four he will shave and have a hot bath; at six he will be on his way, rested and with an accumulation of animal spirits. Besides, here in bed, with all quiet around him, he will try if he cannot think of things to say that might touch off Mr. Badeneau's memory. Lessons in remembrance? He's as bad as Alice Kibbe, and he smiles at himself.

At twelve o'clock he goes into Saloon B and sits at the table, his elbows propped on the edge of it and his chin in his hands, looking over the food. After a while, shaking his head, he cuts up the meat, sets the plate out on the deck where Time can find it, and moves himself slowly back to Saloon A.

But it is hot in here. The noonday sun is pouring down on this end of the *Old Lame Duck*. He can't breathe here. Maybe up in the pilot-house there will be a stronger breeze to put new life into him. After but three rungs up the ladder against the wall he comes down again; he can't this day climb to his old seat of the mighty. If he got there, he tells himself, he would have to be carried. He leans against the ladder, suddenly frightened, is well-nigh in a panic.

Start at six. So she has said. He straightens up his shoulders, clicks his heels together, salutes with a smile of amusement at himself, now. Steady, Easley Wheatley! Back in Saloon B it will be cooler.

He will lie on the cushioned seat for an hour or so, under the seaward window. And there it is indeed cooler, and he sleeps a while.

At four, with the doors locked against impulsive incursions of Mrs. Bullwinkle, he is taking a steaming bath in a galvanized wash-tub set out in the middle of the floor, and the place is so hot from the big stove that he is almost fainting. Naked, he is ashamed of himself. How thin his legs are, and his arms, and how knobby the joints! Running his finger over his deeply riffled chest is like riding over a corduroy road. So the fancy comes to him, and a smile lights up for a moment the old soldier's face.

Shaving afterward, he must prop himself with his left hand against the wall while he cautiously pushes the razor with his right; but even so he cuts a gash in his chin. He would like to utter a rousing "damn," but this word nor anything like it is in Easley Wheatley to-day. Now he must wear a piece of court-plaster; that will be a blot on Alice Kibbe's party.

Nevertheless by 5:45 he is as ready as he can be. His bow-tie is knotted like a four-in-hand; for not once in all his life has he been able properly to tie one of the paltry little things. But his partner will see to it over yonder across the river. No doubt there are other things about him that need fixing, but she will make everything right.

Stepping outside the door of Saloon A, he tries to think whether he has carried out all of Alice Kibbe's instructions. It seems so surely, but his mind is not entirely clear on the subject; and, with his head down, still trying to recollect his movements of the morning and the afternoon, he goes first to Wullie's door and then back to Mrs. Bullwinkle's; and the three are presently on their way along the path to the track.

When the car is in sight, small yet in the distance and rocking from this side to that with its speed, Mr. Wheatley tells his companions to go on over without him. He has forgotten something. "Say to Alice Kibbe I'll be over a little later, but not to hold anything back on my account. I'll surely be there."

Aboard the *Old Lame Duck,* having entered through the door of Saloon B and left it open, he cannot at all remember what it was that he had forgotten, or thought he had forgotten. He remembered it out there. Well, no great dinner ever did begin on schedule time; he will rest a minute on the cushioned window-seat, and maybe he can think what it was that he has overlooked. It might have been something tremendously important to Alice Kibbe. Anyway, she will be so busy and excited she won't have time to worry about him even if he does arrive a little after the dinner has actually started.

Sitting up suddenly, he tears at his collar—he

can't possibly breathe with that thing buttoned around his neck—and lies down again, the collar and tie hanging loose, his right hand over the side of the window-seat, the twitching fingers touching the floor. The big gray cat, just now asleep by the stove, seeing the moving fingers, creeps cautiously along on his belly toward the hand, pauses, rocks himself on his hind legs to get a solid footing, jumps and gathers it ferociously between his paws—paws as soft as a baby's hand—and does not bite.

The old soldier, on his back, pulls open his eyelids; mirth is in the staring sea-blue eyes for a second; and then the lids slide down again. This is an ancient game between these two. "Old Jeb Stuart has attacked again," he whispers. "The battle's ours."

The quick wood-fire that has heated the bath-water is dying down. The kettle's song is a little thing now. A green fly buzzes outside the screened window above the old soldier's head, bumping and bumping against the wire as if he must at all costs get inside here.

There is a scrabbling noise at the screen door, warped at the lower corner opposite the hinge; and Mrs. Bullwinkle's terrapin comes in, seeming little larger than he was that summer when the Armies of the Right and the Left retreated, but in good order, before the Manhattan landlord. Now Mr. Wheatley remembers what it was that worried him over at

the car-line; there he was in doubt whether he had left out some meat for Time, Alice Kibbe having always a fear that Mrs. Bullwinkle, being somewhat flighty, might forget his food some day. Well, he hadn't forgotten; he had left out enough meat for six terrapins.

Having already dined upon Mr. Wheatley's bounty, Time has come in for a customary lark with Jeb Stuart, who is sharpening his claws on the one wooden leg of the stove. Jeb stalks him and taps him; the little terrapin now and then shoves out his head and snaps with an affectation of fury; and there is a great doing about on the tin underneath the stove. And then imperturbable Time, having fed fatly here and had a bit of play, goes gravely out of the door.

Along about 7:30 the old soldier gets to his feet. There is something he ought to be doing. What in the world is it? He stands at the eastern window staring out. Yesterday the view out there was an expanse of reed-covered flat land; now it is a broad hilltop, and in the falling dusk he sees the enormous copper-colored trunks of pine-trees, their huge heads so close together that nothing weedy or spindling can live under them, so that the ground is like a vast floor carpeted deeply with brown straw from the trees.

And everywhere under the widely set trees, dim as

in a church and as quiet, as far as his eyes can see, horses and horses and horses, hundreds and hundreds of them surely, and upon them figures in gray; all still, waiting. And right here close to him, just outside the window, standing where the creek was a while ago, he sees little Paul Lamarque on his roan horse; Hasty Hammond, who always would wear those big cowboy spurs that make as much noise as a log-chain dragging; Anson Dorgan, bending over with his hand poised to kill a horse-fly on his bay's neck; Jean Carpeaux, nervously twisting at his infinitesimal black mustache, of which he is comically proud; Jim Ochiltree, sitting tall and straight and strained in his saddle watching something far away. Who is that fellow between Jim and Jean, the small, wide-shouldered, snub-nosed fellow with the crinkled tow-colored hair showing under his gray felt hat? Why, that would certainly be Easley Wheatley.

Whatever the orders, waiting horses cannot be kept perfectly quiet. They will be shifting from one position to another to rest their legs, or shaking their heads at a fly; and leather will creak, and metal rings of bridal-reins will clink upon metal bit-shanks. But all out there is as quiet as can be. The old soldier, opening the eastern window and looking keenly out, knows that well, knows too

that something tremendous is about to happen.

Off to the south the low thunder of cannon, and he smells the air full of burning powder. The horses expand their nostrils greatly to take it in. Steady, Easley Wheatley! There are cold chills running up and down his backbone, and he is disgusted with himself; he just knows that none of the others is as trembly as he is. Well, he can't help it; he's always been that way when a battle is coming if he must wait long to get into it. God, will the word never come to attack!

He will watch his black horse turning his ears about to catch the floating sounds that drift from every direction, for the horses too know that something is coming; maybe by concentrating upon those nervous clean little ears he can take his mind off the approaching attack.

And presently raising his eyes, he sees the gray figures away off to the left moving, and now he is himself moving. There is a single yell out there, a yell here in the kitchen, a volley of yells out to the right; and the old soldier leaps up on the cushioned window-seat, snatches down Alice Kibbe's decorative battle-piece, and waves it around and around and yells until the cat flees in terror out of the screened door.

Mr. Wheatley is still a moment to look piercingly

out of the window. "Old Jeb Stuart has attacked again; the battle is ours." And now he is lying on the floor, crumpled up against the wall.

The round kitchen clock, like that other one that had to be left behind in Forty-fourth Street, ticks away on its shelf. The ancient ramshackle stove, kept by Alice Kibbe because she feels it a comrade that has been through things with her, is growing quite cold and creaks as if it would fall to pieces the next minute. Outside the night is coming; inside the darkness falls.

Mr. Wheatley, raising himself on all fours, crawls along the wall to the window-seat, and there summoning his utmost strength for a gigantic effort drags himself up on it, holding still to Alice Kibbe's decorative battle-piece. Despite the cool weather outside, he has been well-nigh suffocated with a sensation of heat nearly all day; now he is cold, and with a movement involuntary he pulls up over him that which is in his hands.

"Have you been waitin' long, mother?" His mind is back among other times. "I came just as soon as I was mustered out; I walked most of the way. How long have you been watchin' at this window, here in the dark, mother? There, there, everything will be all right, now. You'll see. . . . Get out that gangplank, you black scalawags, an' mind you roll off the cotton before you start on the barrels of molasses.

. . . Hello, Jess; I was hung up on a sand-bank all last night, so I'm late. . . . Sorry, Rip, but it's low middlin' an' hardly that, but I'll give you seven an' a half; take it on to the warehouse. . . . Goin' to take you out, Alice Kibbe, take you out this night. I don't know what's ahead, nor what I've got to fight, nor what the end's goin' to be, but, child, I've gone into battle knowin' no more than I do now. Ready . . . one more battle . . . last bugle."

And now he is still, and in the dim room is only the movement of seconds ticking on. Outside, in the softening distance, the timeless sea thunders lowly upon the shore; and nearer, in the unfilled meadow to the east, countless little peeper-frogs sing their song of a season, millions of fairy sleigh-bells jingling on away. They are a lullaby to the old soldier, and the room is dark, and sleep takes him prisoner.

It seems that he has been away with his dreams a very long time when he awakes again, with his mind clear and quarreling at himself for wasting so many precious minutes on his back. He will get up right now and go to Alice Kibbe's party. The room is brightly lighted, so it must already be late; and turning his head to glance at the clock, he is looking into the great gray eyes of his partner, kneeling by the cushioned seat.

"Why, Alice Kibbe! Not scared, are you? Did you come back for me? Well, I'll raise the body

an' be with you in a moment, an' we'll go on across the river. God bless my soul, who is that standin' by your side there?"

"That's Mr. Badeneau, daddy."

"It's Mr. Tibby. Our partner."

"It's both," Mr. Tibby says, and Alice Kibbe looks wonderingly up at him, her left hand at her throat.

And now Mr. Wheatley sees Mr. Tibby sinking to his knees by his other partner. His eyes staring hungrily at Mr. Tibby's bowed head, he feels Alice Kibbe clasping his right hand in both of hers and her lips upon it.

"Why, child, the whole party's here—Dr. Juvenny, Mr. Wimpfheimer, everybody. Why do you stand so far away, Wullie, over there by the stove? I see they didn't take your bugle from you." And his eyes go to the face of the round clock on the shelf. "Be careful, Wullie; twelve is here; don't forget your flock feedin' across the sky. Go just outside the door there, Wullie, an' give 'em a good rousin' blast. It's dark to-night, an' they'll get lost if you don't. I've always liked to hear your bugle, Wullie; it reminds me . . . bugles in the night."

Tipping with laborious care outside the door, and standing there in the light from the room, the round-shouldered giant places the big shiny bugle to his mouth, but there comes from it the gentlest call that

ever his bright children of the night have had from him; and then he tips softly in again, shaking his head, his eyes upon the floor.

"Why is everybody so quiet, Alice Kibbe? Mrs. Bullwinkle, where are all your high spirits to-night, an' you so perfect in your figured foulard? All so quiet. I hear the clock tickin' on. Under the *Old Lame Duck* I can even hear the tide goin' out. All so quiet. Why, Alice Kibbe, here are the three partners again, an' doesn't it feel good?"

"It does feel good, sir." But it is Mr. Tibby who speaks, for that other partner, having looked up at Dr. Juvenny inquiringly, has bowed her head against the old man who lies on the cushioned window-seat under the seaward window.

"There, there, child. It can't be helped. Everything will be all right, now. You'll see. I've been foolin'; I know what this is. It's retreat, Alice Kibbe." And after a moment, raising his head a little, he says, "But in good order." And on his lips is the ghost of something wistful, gay, and very gallant.

The tide is going out under the *Old Lame Duck* with a sucking swirling noise. Leaning over, Dr. Juvenny pulls up over the pale pain-sweetened face, the lips yet smiling, Alice Kibbe's battle-piece with the crossed bars, the white stars, and the bullet-holes scorched brown around the edges.